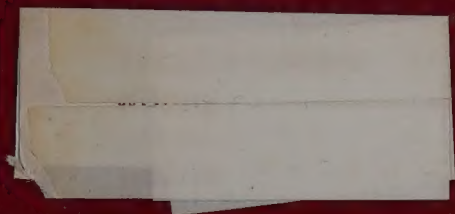


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THE HISTORY OF THE
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
TO THE YEAR 1829

BY

WESLEY EVERETT RICH, PH.D.



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INTRODUCTION

THIS volume of the Economic Studies is a doctor's dissertation offered in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. at Harvard University in 1917. It is but the beginning of a comprehensive investigation which Dr. Rich intended to make of the history and present operations of the United States Post Office. The untimely death of the author leaves it for others to complete the study which he had begun with such zeal and intelligence; but, fortunately, his thesis had covered in a substantially complete way the earlier history of our Post Office, and will smooth the pathway for subsequent investigators. Publication has been made possible by the generosity of the author's family, and the book is a worthy memorial of a young economist of great promise who gave his life for his country during the recent war.

Wesley Everett Rich was born at Chelsea, Massachusetts, on August 13, 1889, and died at Camp Devens on September 25, 1918, from an attack of influenza which developed into pneumonia. He received his bachelor's degree at Wesleyan University in 1911, and his master's degree from the same institution in 1912. From the fall of 1911 until June, 1914, he was a graduate student in economics at Harvard University; and, upon the completion of his thesis, he received from that institution the degree of Ph.D. in 1917. At the close of his resident study at Cambridge he was appointed, in the fall of 1914, instructor in economics and social science at Wesleyan University; and was later advanced to the rank of associate professor. Receiving leave of absence for service in the United States Army, he left Wesleyan on December 3, 1917, leading a company of Middletown soldiers. After preliminary training in the ranks, with a view to entering the field artillery, he was assigned for duty in the Intelligence Department, in which he rendered conspicuous service. If his life had been spared, he would have received a commission which was reported to be on its way at the time of his death.

This brief statement of what Dr. Rich did in the years allotted to him gives us a measure of the man. Modest and unassuming at all times, generous, friendly, and loyal in all relations of life, he united great intelligence and exceptional power of accomplishment. Content always to do, and do well, the natural and obvious thing that lay next at hand, he was able, none the less, to look far ahead in his professional work and to move steadily toward any goal that he set himself. To excellent scholarship he added marked ability in research; and, when the opportunity offered, proved equally successful as a teacher of economic and social science. When the war came, he again did the right and obvious thing, laying aside professional work, upon which he had entered with distinction, to take his place in the ranks at Camp Devens where he felt that he belonged. He could ill be spared, and it is hard for one who knew him to reconcile himself to the loss of a man of such marked promise and engaging qualities. That he left, in form substantially complete, this latest addition to the Harvard Economic Studies is, therefore, a cause for satisfaction. While it serves as a worthy memorial of a young economist who gave his life in regular line of duty, may it also stimulate and assist some other investigator to carry on to its conclusion the investigation which Dr. Rich was not permitted to complete.

CHARLES J. BULLOCK

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

June, 1924

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THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES
POST OFFICE TO THE YEAR 1829

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF POSTAL SERVICE IN THE COLONIES¹

VERY soon after the founding of the British settlements in America the colonists felt the need of some regular means of communication. Lacking a complete postal system, they had to resort to several methods of sending letters, all of which were more or less uncertain and unsatisfactory. Where distances were short, as between the villages of one colony, it was the custom to send special messengers; but for many of the longer journeys, from one colony to another, letters were entrusted to travelers and merchants. Letters to and from England, probably the most important sort of correspondence at the time, were carried by the captains of private vessels, for as yet there were no government packets. It was common for the masters of ships about to sail for America to hang up a bag in some coffee-house to receive letters. Custom had fixed the fee at a penny for a single letter and two pence for a double letter or parcel.² ✓

✓ The first proposals for the establishment of a post office in America seem to have come from New England in 1638. It was suggested that the king should grant a patent for sixty years to some one who would set up this institution "so useful and absolutely necessary." A fee of 2*d.*, "the least coin there," was proposed for each letter.³ So far as this suggestion touched the granting of a royal patent for the establishment of a general post office, it was not acted upon for more than fifty years. In the meantime several of the colonies had moved on their own initiative.

¹ For an excellent account of the early years of the Post Office in the colonies the reader is referred to Miss Mary E. Woolley's monograph on the *Early History of the Colonial Post Office*, published 1894 by the Rhode Island Historical Society. While essentially different in point of view from this work, this essay has been of much use to the present writer.

² *Cal. T. P.*, 1697-1702, 289.

³ *Cal. S. P., Col.*, 1574-1660, 275.

The first action of any legislature in this direction is found in the following resolve, passed by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1639:

For preventing the miscarriage of letters — It is ordered that notice be given that Richard Fairbanks his house in Boston is the place appointed for all letters, which are brought from beyond the seas or are to be sent thither, are to bee brought to him and he is to take care, that they bee delivered, or sent according to their directions, and hee is allowed for every such letter 1d. and must answer all miscarriages through his owne neglect in this kind; provided that no man shall bee compelled to bring his letters thither except hee please.¹

This action of Massachusetts so early in its history is full of interest. In the first place, it provides for foreign, not domestic letters. This was probably the most important problem at the time. In the second place, there was no attempt at compulsion, no requirement that letters should be delivered only to the office thus established, no prohibition of handling them in any other way. Instead, the arrangement was made solely as a matter of convenience to those having mail to transmit. In this respect the colonists followed the English practice of the time with reference to foreign letters. Until 1660 there was no provision at all for the handling of such letters by the British post office. In that year it was provided that ship-captains should deliver letters to the postmaster at the ports, but no payment was fixed for such service, nor was any penalty established for failure to comply with the requirement. It was to supply an incentive to captains that the custom arose of paying a fee of a penny for each letter delivered by them.²

The problems of the colonists were not all connected with foreign letters. The correspondence of the period is full of complaints as to the difficulty of sending and receiving domestic letters. In 1652 Samuel Symonds, of Ipswich, writes to John Winthrop, Jr.: "I cannot say but its besides my intentions that I write not more frequently unto you; I can onely plead this for my excuse (so farr as it will goe) — the uncertainty when and how to convey letters."³ This "uncertainty" was very real; for people in those days had no way of sending letters except by means of travelers or

¹ *Rec. Mass.*, i, 281. *Mass. Hist. Coll.* 3, vii, 48.

² *Joyce*, 73.

³ *Mass. Hist. Coll.* 4, vii, 128.

merchants, unless they employed special messengers. For the latter service Indians were often employed, and they seem to have been much in favor with the settlers on account of their faithfulness, their endurance, and their familiarity with the country.¹ Even after the establishment of regular mails, these native carriers were employed in New York.²

Eighteen years after Massachusetts had passed her act with regard to foreign correspondence, the Dutch in New Netherland also made an attempt to regulate the transmission of such letters. They carried their regulation far beyond what Massachusetts had done, ordering that no one might visit an incoming vessel until the representative of the governing officer had boarded her and had received the letters she carried. Violation of this law was punished by a fine of thirty guilders.³ In 1659 and 1660 the authorities in Amsterdam sought to check the activity of ship captains by providing a heavy fine for all who should collect or carry letters except from those authorized to receive them. In accordance with this policy a box was established in New Amsterdam, in the office of the Secretary of the Province, to which all persons were directed to bring their letters.⁴

These earliest acts of Massachusetts and New Netherland dealt with the single question of foreign letters, but another phase of the problem soon received attention. In 1661 the Virginia Assembly passed an act to facilitate the transmission of public and official letters. It was provided that "all letters superscribed for the service of his Majesty or publique shall be immediately conveyed from plantation to plantation to the place and person they are directed to and a penalty of 350 pounds of tobacco to each defaulter."⁵ The subject treated by this act remained of great importance throughout the entire colonial period.

The first regular intercolonial post resulted from the efforts of Governor Lovelace of New York. Having considered the difficulties under which he and the other governors labored because of their lack of a certain means of communication between the col-

¹ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 4, vi, 242, 256, 276.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 379, 380.

² Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days*, 275.

⁵ Hening, ii, 109.

³ *Laws and Ord. of New Neth.*, 313.

onies, he determined to establish a regular service to New England. On December 10, 1672, he issued a proclamation stating that on January 1, 1673, a messenger would start on the first of a series of monthly trips to Boston. All persons wishing to send letters by this post were directed to deposit them in the office of the Colonial Secretary and pay the stated postage.¹

At the same time Lovelace wrote to Winthrop, Governor of Connecticut, under date of December 27:

I herewith present you with two rarities, a packquett of the latest intelligence I could meet withal, and a post — by the latter you will meet with a monthly fresh supply; so that if it receive but the same ardent inclinations as first it hath for myself, by our monthly advisers, all publique occurrence may be transmitted between us, together with severall conveniencys of publique importance, consonant to the demands laid upon by his sacred majesty, who strictly enjoins all his American subjects to enter into a close correspondency with each other. — this person that has undertaken the employment I conceaved most proper, being voted active stout, and indefatigable — I have a fixt an annual sallery, on him, which, together with the advantage of his letters and other small portable packages may afford him a handsome livelihood. — The maile has divers baggs, according to the towns the letters are designed to, which are sealed up till their arrival with the seal of the secretarie's office —. Only by-letters are in an open bag, to dispense by the wayes —. I beg of you furtherance to so universall a good work; that is to afford him directions where, and to whom to make his application upon his arrival at Boston; as likewise to afford him what letters you can to establish him in that employment there. It would be advantageous to our designe, if in the intervall you discoursed with some of the most able woodmen, to make out the best and most facile way for a post, which in process of tyme would be the King's best highway; as likewise passages and accommodations at rivers, fords and other places.²

The messenger was to have started on January 1, but in hope of getting later news from England, Lovelace held him for some weeks, so that he set out on his journey on January 22, 1673. His start is described in some detail in the *Memorial History of New York*.³ He had various small leather "portmantles" stuffed full of letters and small parcels. He was sworn to behave civilly, to inquire the best post road, and to blaze a path for the guidance of travelers. But in spite of so promising a beginning, this project did not succeed, on account of the wars with the Indians and with

¹ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*; Brodhead, ii, 196.

² Brodhead, ii, 196, 198.

³ *Mem. Hist. of N. Y.*, i, 355, 356.

the Dutch, which completely interrupted intercolonial communications.

Soon after this attempt on the part of Lovelace ~~we find~~ several acts of colonial assemblies concerning post riders and postal service. In January, 1673, ~~Massachusetts~~ passed an act which for the first time gave public riders a fixed allowance. It recited that "the occasions of the country doe frequently require that messengers be sent post and as yet no stated allowance is settled in such cases"; and provided that 3*d.* per mile be paid from the public treasury "as full satisfaction for the expense of horse and man." Inn-keepers were forbidden to charge the public post more than 2*d.* per bushel for oats and 4*d.* for hay, "day and night."¹

In 1674 Connecticut passed a similar act,

being sensible of the great damage that may accrue to the publique by a liberty or boldness which some persons may take to themselves (when employed by order of authority for the conveyance of letters, post and other important occasions of the colony) by profuse and extravagant spending at the ordinaries and other places upon the countrye's accot.

Twenty-four routes were authorized. On that from Rye to Hartford, the horse hire was fixed at 10*s.* and the allowance for riders' compensation and expenses at 20*s.*² From the middle of October to the last of April riders were to be allowed 8*d.* extra "for every night they lye out, for oates to the horses." All ferriage was to be charged to the country's account, and a schedule was made of the rates which inn-keepers might charge riders.³

These acts of Massachusetts and Connecticut concerned only the transmission of public letters; they made no provision for the letters of private individuals. The handling of the latter was still uncertain and unsatisfactory. More especially was this true in the seaport towns where foreign letters were received and despatched. Both in England and in the Colonies the custom, already referred to, of hanging up a bag in the coffee-house to receive foreign correspondence allowed any person the opportunity, under pretext of inserting his own letter, to take out others already deposited in the bag, which might then be delayed or de-

¹ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 49. *Recs. Mass.*, 4, Pt. 2, 574.

² *Conn. Col. Recs.*, ii, 242.

³ *Ibid.*, 243, 244.

stroyed. There is no doubt that this was often done, and it was a serious drawback to this method of handling mail.¹ In addition, there were other faults to be found with the prevailing system, as is seen from the petition presented to the Massachusetts General Court in 1677. Several of the most prominent merchants of Boston complained that, besides the losses and delays occasioned by the careless handling of letters, even more serious results followed from the fact that foreign letters were thrown upon the exchange as soon as received, and were allowed to lie there until called for; and there was no assurance that the rightful owner would get them at all.²

Such being the case, the merchants prayed the General Court "to depute some mete person to take in and convey letters according to direction" and also to "sett the prices on letters." In response to this appeal, John Hayward, "the Scrivener," was appointed, December 27, 1677.³ From various sources we learn that this John Hayward was subsequently reappointed in 1680,⁴ when he was given a monopoly of the postal business, and served until his death in 1687. His son John was probably his successor, for in 1691 we find that Samuel Sewall mentions John Hayward as letter carrier.⁵

Postal service in Pennsylvania had its beginnings in 1683, when William Penn issued an order for the establishment of a post office, and granted to Henry Waldy, "of Tekonay," authority to carry letters and "to supply passengers with horses to New Castle, or to the Falls [of the Delaware]." The post was to go once a week and the time of departure was to be announced by notices posted on the doors of the meeting-house, and in other conspicuous places. Rates of postage were provided for between Philadelphia, New Castle, the Falls, and Maryland, varying from 3*d.* to 9*d.* for single letters.⁶ It is possible that before this plan went into operation there had been in use in the colony a scheme for transmitting public letters through the agency of justices of the peace, sheriffs, and constables. These officers could press into

¹ *Cal. T. P.*, 1697-1702, 289.

² *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 49.

³ *Ibid.*, 50. *Recs. Mass.*, i, 302.

⁴ *Recs. Mass.*, 7, 147, 273.

⁵ *Hist. of Suffolk County, Mass.*, ii, 449.

⁶ Watson, *Annals of Phila.*, ii, 391, 392.

service horse or man at any time, consideration being given at the rate of 2*d.* per mile.¹

In 1684 the most ambitious project yet suggested for inter-colonial postal communication was brought forward by Governor Dongan of New York. He proposed a chain of post houses from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas. Parliament had granted the revenues of the British post office to the Duke of York, and Dongan thought that the duke's title embraced the colonial post as well. Accordingly he wrote to Sir John Werden, the duke's secretary, setting forth his plan. Sir John replied:

As for setting up Post Houses along the coast from Carolina to Nova Scotia, it seems a very reasonable thing and you may offer the privilege thereof to any undertakers for ye space of 3 or 5 years by way of farme: reserving *wt* part of ye proffitt you thinke fitt, to the Duke (not less *yn* one tenth) the farmers to acct to ye Duke either upon oath or by inspection into their bookes or any other way wch. you shall judge convenient and safe for the Duke, to know the true value thereof. And we thinke you were right when you asserted the Dukes title to the profitts of all post offices within his Ma^{ts}. dominion was not to be doubted but is intended over all the foreigne plantations as well as in Europe.²

In February, 1684, Dongan replied to Werden that he was about to go to Connecticut and would make every effort toward furthering the scheme. "I never intended," he wrote, "that it should be expensive to his Royal Highness; it was designed by the neighboring colonies and is at present practiced in some places by foot and horse messengers."³ In Dongan's conference with Governor Treat, at Milford, the matter was discussed and arrangements were started for a service as far east as Boston. On the former's return to New York it was voted by the Council that

for the better correspondence between the Colonies of America, a post office be established; and that the rates for riding post be per mile 3*d.*; for every single letter not above one hundred miles, three pence; if more proportionably.⁴

Dongan's great scheme got no further than this, and even the post between New York and Boston was neither very regular nor very satisfactory. The larger plan, of service from Nova Scotia to

¹ *Hist. Mag.*, iii, 222.

² *N. Y. Col. Docs.* iii, 349.

³ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

Carolina, failed of realization because of the small volume of correspondence to be carried.¹ Meanwhile Edward Randolph had been appointed the Duke of York's deputy postmaster in New England, on November 19, 1685.² He held this office until the Revolution in Massachusetts in 1689.³

The idea of postal service along the northern Atlantic coast was not abandoned on the failure of Dongan's plans. In 1687 it was revived by Governor Andros of Massachusetts. He wrote to John Allyn at Hartford that he had conferred with one John Perry in regard to the latter's making the trip from Boston to Hartford once a month in winter, "if nott further, as far as Fairfield and Stamford, as I designe oftener in the springe."⁴ To this Allyn answered that he was in favor of the plan and suggested that the service be made every three weeks in summer. He thought that the receipts from letters would not suffice to pay the costs, and so favored trying the post on salary for a year or so, in order to find out accurately the cost of the service.⁵

From letters and other documents we find that this same Perry had already, before this time, been making trips to Connecticut. In the "Account of Disbursements of His Majesty's Government," printed in the "Usurpation Papers,"⁶ we find items of payments to Perry for carrying the letters of Governor Andros to the government of Connecticut in 1686-87. Samuel Sewall makes frequent mention of him as the bearer of letters, and also mentions the rate of postage, 3*d*.⁷ He seems to think that Perry was not fully trustworthy, for he records that he suspected the carrier had been opening his letters, and adds that "he is said to have been imprisoned in New York on that score."⁸ But Perry continued long in the service and was faithful at least to those who had appointed him. During the Revolution of 1689 he was arrested by Leisler's orders and taken to New York, where his letters were taken from him and submitted to that leader's scrutiny.⁹

In 1688, fifty years after the proposal from New England had urged the necessity of a post office, an Order in Council provided:

¹ *Hist. Suffolk County, Mass.*, iii, 449.

² Palfrey, iv, 484.

³ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁴ *Conn. Col. Recs.*, iii, 393.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁶ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 178.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6, i, 25, 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁹ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, iii, 682.

His Majesty is also pleased to order that letter offices be settled in such . . . of His Majesty's plantations as shall by the Earle of Rochester be found convenient for His Majesty's service, and the ease and benefitt of his subjects according to the method and rates . . . settled for His Majesty's Island of Jamaica.¹

As has been noted, Randolph was deputy postmaster in New England, and Governor Dongan appointed William Bogardus, a notary public, postmaster for the Province of New York.² In June of 1689 Randolph was imprisoned in Boston, together with Andros, and the General Court of Massachusetts appointed Richard Wilkins postmaster, "to receive all letters and deliver them at 1*d*." ³ Wilkins held office until 1693, when the post office passed under the control of Hamilton, deputy in the colonies for Neale, holder of a royal patent for a post office in America.

¹ Quoted in Joyce, 110. ² Brodhead, ii, 466. ³ *Mass. Prov. Recs.*, vi, 37.

CHAPTER II

THE COLONIAL POST UNDER NEALE'S PATENT

1692-1707

THE year 1692 marks the end of the first period in the history of the Colonial Post. Previous to this time what slight development had taken place was due to the independent action of the various colonies. Now a new form of organization appears; for on February 17, 1692, a patent was granted to Thomas Neale, a court favorite,¹ empowering him to set up and maintain a post office in the colonies for the term of twenty-one years. He was guaranteed a monopoly of this business and was to receive all the profits arising from it. In return he was to pay a rent of six shillings a year into the Royal Treasury.

Because there appear in the subsequent colonial acts two interpretations of the powers granted to Neale, it is worth while to examine the patent in some detail. The preamble sets forth that there never hath bin any post established for the conveying of letters within or between Virginia Maryland Delaware New Yorke New England East and West Jersey Pensilvania and Northward as far as our Dominions reach and that the want thereof hath been a great hindrance to the Trade of those parts.²

For these reasons Neale was given power to set up offices in each of the colonies for the sending and receiving of letters. He was to receive from ship-masters and others

any letters or Pacquetts whatsoever which shall be brought into the said colonyes and Iselands or any of them from England or from any parts whatsoever or which shall be sent from any parts or places of such respective Colony or Iseland to any other parts or place of the same.³

¹ Thomas Neale had been the holder of various small offices around the Court, such as that of groom porter; Macaulay, iv, 391. He was also master of the mint from 1679 to 1699.

The full text of the patent was printed for the first time as an appendix to Miss Woolley's monograph already referred to.

² Woolley, 27.

³ *Ibid.*, 27, 28.

These provisions are reproduced in full in order to give the most definite answer possible to the question just what letters were to be handled by Neale's post office. Though it seems clear enough that the grant gave power to carry letters passing from place to place within the limits of the same colony, the laws of only Massachusetts and Virginia fixed rates for such service. Other acts touched intercolonial service solely. This matter will be discussed in greater detail when we come to speak of the development of the office under the patent, but it is necessary at this point to establish the fact that Neale was given authority over intra-colonial letters as well as intercolonial. The words we have quoted here were repeated in a later portion of the document, where explicit directions were given with regard to the forwarding of various sorts of letters by the post.¹

The patent gave Neale a monopoly in the carriage of letters for profit, but provided that merchants or others might send their letters by any sort of messenger whom they might especially engage for the service. In these days of cheap postage such a provision seems insignificant, but in colonial times it afforded an opportunity for the evasion of postal charges to an extent which was a constant source of complaint on the part of postmasters all through the period.

Little was said in the patent with regard to the rates of postage. It was stipulated that Neale should receive "such rates and sumes of money as shall be proportionable to the rates for the post or carriage of letters sett downe . . . in . . . the Act of Parliament" fixing charges for England or "such other rates and sumes of money as the Planters and others shall freely agree to give for their letters and Pacquetts upon the first settlement of such . . . offices."² The postmaster was to "satisfie and pay the masters of vessels for conveyance and delivery of such letters and pacquetts as shall be sent to England." Wherever ferries existed in the colonies Neale was to agree with the proprietors as to their charges.³

The patent was to run for twenty-one years, and no accounting was to be rendered to the British Treasury until the twentieth year. Nevertheless, it was provided that "accounts in books

¹ Woolley, 30.

² *Ibid.*, 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 30.

fairly written" must be kept of all money received or expended in each year. These were to be constantly open to the inspection of Treasury officials, and in addition a report must be made of the state of the office after three years.

Neale himself never came to America, but appointed as his deputy Andrew Hamilton, a Scotchman, who had been in the Jerseys since 1685 and had served successively as agent of the proprietors and as governor of the province. Hamilton was appointed April 4, 1692, and at once took up the work of establishing the post office. Taking personal charge of the negotiations, he succeeded in persuading the various colonial assemblies to pass a series of laws which fixed uniform charges for intercolonial service. In regard to intra-colonial letters, however, he was not so successful. The acts of most of the colonies failed to deal with this matter at all, but Massachusetts established a number of local rates, and the act of Virginia provided for the sending of "letters and packetts unto any part of this colony."¹

The first act passed was that of New York, where Governor Fletcher heartily coöperated with Hamilton in securing the desired action. The law provided that a general letter office was to be established in the City of New York.² The postmaster was to provide "horses and furniture" for all through posts; other persons were forbidden to do so under penalty of a fine of £100. Letters to the West Indies, Europe, and other places beyond the seas were to be charged 9*d.*; those to Maryland 9*d.*; to Virginia 12*d.* To any place not exceeding eighty miles distant the charge was 4½*d.* All postmasters were freed from excise and all public services, excepting the postmaster of New York City, who was freed from public services only.

All ship-masters were directed, upon arrival, to deliver all their letters to the post office at New York. For some reason it was provided that no letters going up or down the Hudson or to and from Long Island should be sent by means of the post office. Inasmuch as the letters here enumerated formed about all the intra-colonial correspondence of that time, the act operated to remove this entirely from the control of Neale's office. This would seem

¹ Hening, iii, 112.

² *Col. Laws of N. Y.*, i, 293-296.

to be in direct violation of the provisions of the patent which we have already quoted, but we find no record of the disallowance of this act by the British authorities on this or other grounds. The original life of this act was three years; but it was continued without change in 1695, 1699, 1702, 1705, and, with minor changes, in 1708.¹

Next to New York the action of Massachusetts is probably the most interesting. The original act, passed in June, 1693,² was in its provisions regarding intercolonial service very similar to the New York act of 1692. Its provisions were somewhat more full, however, as to local rates within the colony, and as to some details of the service. There was a penalty provided for delaying the post at ferries, and a further penalty was laid upon a delinquent postmaster. The directions for handling letters were somewhat more developed than in the New York act, since it was provided that each letter was to be marked with a print showing the day of the month and the year in which it was received at the office. This is the earliest provision relating to postmarks in America, postmarks having been introduced in England in connection with Dockwra's penny post about 1681.³ Letters which had not been called for within forty-eight hours were to be delivered at an additional charge of one penny. Ship-masters were to deliver their letters to the postmaster at Boston, and receive from him a fee of one half-penny for each letter. Public letters were to pass free when properly marked.

The chief interest in this act, outside of the new features it contained, lies in the fact that it was disallowed by the Privy Council on the ground that it seemed to supersede the patent to Thomas Neale and that it was "prejudicial to the office of Postmaster General." In addition, the act was held to be defective with regard to the transmission of letters to England. There was no provision by which Hamilton was directed to order that all masters of vessels should deliver their letters to the English postal authorities, and it was feared that loss of revenue might result from this defect. For these and other reasons less important the act

¹ *Col. Laws of N. Y.*, i, 346, 347, 410, 525, 526, 580, 581, 612-615.

² *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 50-54.

³ Hemmeon, 29; Joyce, 38.

was set aside in favor of one drawn with the help of Neale himself.¹ After this act, which was in force three years, the Massachusetts legislature was very slow to pass acts for the support of the post office, as is shown by the repeated petitions of Duncan Campbell and his son John, who were the postmasters from 1693 to 1719.²

Most of the other colonies passed acts for the encouragement and support of the office. New Hampshire³ and Connecticut⁴ seem to have regarded it as an established institution, to which they gave support, New Hampshire voting somewhat irregular allowances to the "postmaster of New England"⁵ and Connecticut allowing the post to pass free of charge over all ferries within the colony. Rhode Island did nothing at all during the period.

Pennsylvania passed acts for the support of the office in 1693, 1697, and 1700.⁶ An office was established at Philadelphia and rates were fixed to most of the other colonies.⁷ Service was provided to New Castle, Del., and to various points in Maryland. The latter colony passed no act for the post office within this period, though Hamilton kept urging the assembly to action.⁸ Farther south the colonies were too thinly peopled to make the post successful. Virginia, indeed, passed one of the earliest acts, in March, 1693. This act is one of the most interesting because it gives the postmaster power over intra-colonial letters.⁹ Beverly, in the "History of Virginia," writes that "by reason of the inconvenient distance of their habitations and the want of towns the project fell to nothing."¹⁰ South Carolina made an unavailing effort in 1702,¹¹ but North Carolina did nothing at this time.

Many interesting sidelights on the condition of the institution are to be found in contemporary records. For example we find Duncan Campbell, Hamilton's deputy in Massachusetts, complaining to the legislature of that colony that the mails were often delayed on the road because the riders were kept waiting for

¹ *Col. Ser.*, 1693-96, 638, 639.

² *N. H. Prov. Recs.*, ii, 100, 101.

³ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 55-58, 60, 65.

⁴ *Conn. Col. Recs.*, iv, 123.

⁵ *N. H. Prov. Recs.*, ii, 157; iii, 30, 31, 61, 248-257, 281.

⁶ Duke of Yorke's Laws, 224, 225; 262. *Stats. at Large*, ii, 57-61.

⁷ *Hist. Mag.*, iii, 222.

⁸ *Md. Arch.*, xix, 46, 150, 175, 176, 189, 513.

⁹ Hening, iii, 112.

¹⁰ P. 90.

¹¹ Cooper, ii, 188, 189.

travelers; that the masters of vessels defied the law and delivered letters as they pleased.¹ To remedy this he sought to have a law passed to prohibit the boarding of any vessel before she had delivered up her letters to the post office. This expedient had been tried by the Dutch at New Amsterdam in 1659 and 1660.² After repeated petitions this was incorporated in a law of 1703.³

By the terms of the patent Neale was to make a full report of the state of the post office after three years. Actually this report was not presented until 1698, when Hamilton himself went to England to confer with the Postmaster General and to urge further changes in the service. He showed that, although a post had been established to run weekly from Portsmouth, N. H., to Philadelphia, and to New Castle, Del., the office was far from being self-supporting.⁴ From the establishment of the service up to May, 1697, Neale's expenses had been £3,817 and the receipts but £1,457, leaving a deficit of £2,360.⁵ Of this sum Hamilton thought that £600 might be chargeable to the posts in Maryland and Virginia, which had never yielded any appreciable return. Yet, in the face of such a showing, he and most others expected that the American post office would soon become self-supporting.

The returns from the New York post rose steadily from £61 in the first year to £212 in the year ending May 1, 1697, the fourth year of its existence. As to expenses, we know that the postmaster was paid £20 per year salary, and that he had in addition two allowances, one of £90 for carrying the mail halfway to Boston, and one of £60 for carrying it to Philadelphia.⁶ The postmaster at the latter place had a salary of £10, but Hamilton recorded that he had some difficulty in securing proper management and was forced to change this official in 1694. Up to May 1, 1697, this post had yielded altogether £115 13s. 1d., and was showing improvement.⁷

¹ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 56, 57.

² See pages 4 and 5, *ante*.

³ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 64, 65; Acts and Res., i, 420.

⁴ The report of Hamilton in 1698 has been accessible to the present writer only in the considerably abridged form in which it appears in *Cal. T. P.*, 1697-1702, 289. Consequently most of the details are given from Joyce, who has used the original document.

⁵ Joyce, II2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II2.

By far the best showing was made by the posts which Hamilton grouped under the name of "Boston, Road Island, Connecticut and Piscataway Posts." The returns on these had increased from £148 per year to £298, in the fourth year of their existence.¹ How large a part of the total charges fell to New England is shown by a report which John Campbell, Postmaster General for the province, made to the Massachusetts General Court in 1703. He estimated that the total annual charges for the whole system were £680, of which £453 was chargeable to New England and £227 to New York and Philadelphia. From this he calculated that the office would have to take in about £37 15s. 6d. per month to be self-supporting, whereas it had actually received £12 12s. 8d. and had postage due it amounting to £9 4s. 8d.; so that its net loss was nearly £16 per month, or about £190 per year.²

There is possibly some exaggeration in this account, inasmuch as Campbell was trying to stir up the General Court to pass new postal laws and give him a large allowance from the provincial funds. However, Hamilton's report shows that charges were still in excess of receipts, while an examination of colonial records shows that legislatures were constantly being urged to pass laws for the support of the post office. Probably the chief reason for this is to be found in the fact that the service was still very slow and uncertain. Boston and Philadelphia were both more considerable ports than New York, so that letters from that place to England were usually sent by one of the other ports. The mails traveled slowly along the routes established. Even as late as 1770 the post took a week to go from Boston to New York in the summer time; in winter there was no service oftener than once a fortnight.³

A letter from Lord Cornbury to the Lords of Trade, dated June 30, 1704, well shows the condition of affairs:

I beg your Lordships to consider likewise the difficulty I lye under, with respect to opportunity's of writing to England, which is this — The post that goes through this place goes eastward as far as Boston, but westward he goes no further than Philadelphia, and there is no other post upon all this con-

¹ Joyce, 112.

² *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 65, 66.

³ Weeden, 410; Palfrey, iv, 328; *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, v, 55.

continent, so that if I have any letters to send to Virginia or Maryland, I must either send an Express who is often retarded for want of boats to cross those great rivers, they must go over — or else for want of horses, or else I must send them by some passengers who are going thither — The least I have known any Express take to go from hence to Virginia has been three weeks, so that very often before I can hear from Coll. Nicholson what time the fleet will sail and send my packets the fleet is sailed — I hope we shall find a way to remedy that shortly for Coll. Nicholson and Coll. Seymour have wrote me word that they will be here in September and I do then intend to propose to them the settling of a Post by which I shall have opportunity to write your Lordship by every ship that sails from this continent — I must further acquaint your Lordships that our letters do not come safe by the way of Boston, I have had several letters by that way which have been broken open.¹

Cornbury's plan for establishing the post on a firm footing was to have each colony lay a tax for defraying its share of the expenses of the general office. By this means he hoped to secure a continuous service from Boston to North Carolina, in spite of the poor results which had attended Hamilton's efforts in the more southerly colonies. But this scheme came to nothing, because the meeting of governors at which it was to have been proposed did not occur. A series of mischances, alarms of Indians, and attacks on the French, kept all the governors busy at home, and Cornbury had no chance to submit his proposals.² What success he would have met can only be conjectured.

Hamilton, in connection with his report of 1698, proposed a remedy for the poor showing of the posts, namely, to raise the rates of postage. The leading rates in force at that time were as follows:

	<i>d.</i>
Not over 80 miles	4½
Boston to New York	12
Boston to Jersey	15
Boston to Philadelphia	15
Boston to Maryland	24
Boston to Virginia	24
New York to Maryland	12
New York to Virginia	12

For these it was proposed to substitute other rates which were substantially higher, especially in those parts of the colonies in

¹ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, iv, 1113.

² *Ibid.*, 1120.

which the greatest losses had arisen. Thus the new charges were to be: ¹

	<i>d.</i>
Not over 80 miles.....	6
Over 80 and not over 150 miles.....	9
Boston to New York, 300 miles (<i>sic</i>).....	12
Boston to Jersey, 370 miles.....	18
Boston to Philadelphia, 390 miles.....	20
Boston to Maryland, 550 miles.....	36
Boston to Virginia, 680 miles.....	42
New York to Maryland, 350 miles.....	24
New York to Virginia, 380 miles.....	30

The rate from New York to Virginia was made higher because of "many broad and dangerous bays and rivers to be ferryed over." In addition to these changes in rates of postage, Hamilton desired to see uniform laws to the effect that the post should pass all ferries free of charge. Some colonies had already passed such acts, but even from them came complaints that ferrymen were obstinate and often detained the post. In some places it had been provided that ship-captains must deliver up their letters to the postal authorities at the ports they entered, to receive for the same one half-penny each. This they were not in the habit of doing, since the old-fashioned method of collecting letters by a bag in the coffee-house had yielded them a penny a letter, and they were loath to give up this source of income. Hamilton proposed an act of Parliament to make them give up this custom, and an increase in the payment from one half-penny to one penny. He further proposed that rates of postage should be fixed for a carriage of letters from England to America, 6*d.* for a single letter, 12*d.* for a double letter, and so on in proportion.² Such changes he deemed necessary in order to save the institution, for Neale was at the end of his resources.

The Postmasters General, Cotton and Frankland, did not wholly approve of Hamilton's proposals. They held that the inland rates he had proposed were too high, and that the end he sought would be better obtained by lowering rather than by raising the charges. Their own experience, they reported to the Treasury, had proved to their satisfaction that "the easy and cheap

¹ *Cal. T. P.*, 1697-1702, 289; Joyce, 113.

² Joyce, 114.



correspondency doth encourage people to write letters"; and they cited the increase in the revenue of the British Post Office which had followed the lowering of rates between England and Scotland in 1657.¹

Since the post office did not own the vessels on which letters were to be transported, it was held that to impose rates of sea postage would be to fix a charge where no service was rendered, and this was contrary to the established policy of the post office. It seemed possible to Cotton and Frankland to provide for the delivery of letters by ship-captains without a special act of Parliament. They recommended that an officer should be appointed, in London, to take charge of letters for the colonies. Public notice was to be given, prohibiting any other person from so collecting mail; and the bags were to be sealed and given to the ship-masters, to be by them delivered to the postal officers in the first port at which their ships should touch. For the completion of this service one penny per letter would be paid them.²

The unsatisfactory state of the office in America was due, so Cotton and Frankland held, to lack of support on the part of the colonial governments. There was doubtless some reason in this contention. The various legislatures were slow to fix allowances from the public treasuries for this purpose, and always demanded at least the free transmission of all public letters. Since these must be forwarded at once upon their receipt by the postmaster, regardless of whether or not there was any regular mail service on that day, such provisions resulted in no little hardship and expense to the postmasters and materially diminished the good which resulted from the public grants for the support of the post office.³

Such conditions seemed sure to arise so long as the posts were in private hands, and on that account the Postmasters General were in favor of transferring them to the government. Neale, the patentee, was ready to give up his rights for a payment of £5,000 at once, or £1,000 a year for the life of his patent. This the post office authorities were not ready to give, so the patent re-

¹ *Cal. T. P.*, 1697-1702, 289.

² Joyce, 115.

³ Cf. *N. H. Prov. Recs.*, iii, 281; *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 70.

mained in Neale's hands. The next year he died, heavily in debt. His interests in the American post office he had assigned to two of his creditors, Hamilton and one West, an Englishman. These two continued to operate the office until 1703, when Andrew Hamilton died. His share in the enterprise fell to his widow, who carried on the work until 1706.

In that year, when the patent had yet seven years to run, the holders petitioned for a further grant for twenty-one years. They sought, in addition, the right to establish a packet service between England and the American colonies. Such a service had been established to the West Indies in 1702, the vessels calling at Barbados, the Leeward Islands, and Jamaica.¹ Since there were many ships passing between these islands and the mainland colonies, the benefit to the postal service was considerable, but not comparable to that which could be obtained from direct communication.² As in former years, Cotton and Frankland were opposed to any fresh grant or any increase in the powers of the patentees. They strongly advised the government to purchase the rights of West and Mrs. Hamilton, and in the next year, 1707, this was done. The price paid is said to have been £1,664.³ The Hamilton family did not, however, cease to be connected with the post office, for John, Andrew's son, was appointed Postmaster General for America and served until 1730.⁴

¹ Hemmeon, 118; Joyce, 78.

² Ernst, in *L'Union Postale*, xx, No. 1 (1895).

³ Joyce, 116; Ernst, *loc. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.*; Cf. Ernst in *Hist. of Suffolk County, Mass.*, ii, 451.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLONIAL POST AS A BRANCH OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE, 1707-1775

POSTAL service in the colonies was but slightly developed when the control of the office passed from the hands of Neale's assignees into those of the British Postmasters General. Settlement was still confined to a slowly widening strip along the seacoast, with but few portions of the interior beginning to be occupied. In New England such towns as Wells, York, Kittery, Amesbury, Haverhill, Groton, Lancaster, Marlboro, and Deerfield had not lost their frontier character. Brookfield, Mendon, and Woodstock, with Simsbury, Waterbury, Woodbury, and Danbury in Connecticut, were outposts against the Indians. In the middle and southern colonies only the fur traders and the first advance guard of settlers had gone beyond the mountains.

The total population of the colonies at this time was somewhere near 275,000. Of this number New England had about 100,000; New York, which extended up the Hudson as far as Albany, about 20,000. In the region of the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, 35,000 more were scattered along the seacoast. South of them, in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, was a population of 115,000, but settlement had not gone far into the interior. South Carolina, detached from the other colonies, stood apart by itself as a frontier against the Spanish and Indians, its 9,000 inhabitants grouped closely around Charleston.

Roads throughout the colonies were few and poor, and bad weather made them practically impassable. In winter the snows of the north and the rains of the south completely demoralized the mail service. Thus the Boston "News-Letter" of February 5, 1705, says:

The East post came in Saturday . . . who says there is no Travailing with horses, especially beyond Newbury, but with snow-shoes, which our people do much use now that never did before. The West post likewise says 't is very bad Travailing.¹

¹ Weeks and Bacon, *Historical Digest of the Provincial Press*, Mass. Series, i, 146.

From Boston there was a weekly service to New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and the middle colonies, but south of Philadelphia there was no regularity in the carriage of letters. The mails moved very slowly, for we find Cornbury at New York writing to the Lords of Trade in 1708 that "sometimes a letter is six weeks coming from Virginia, sometimes longer."¹

The problem of intercolonial communication by land was not the only problem which the post office had to meet. There was no direct packet service from England to the mainland colonies, and that by way of the West Indies was uncertain and was soon abandoned.² Failing this, it was necessary for the postmasters to plan very carefully in order to take full advantage of the scanty opportunities by the irregular sailings of merchant vessels. The "News-Letter" of June 3, 1706, gives notice of a letter sent out by the British Postmasters General charging the officials in the colonies to keep in touch with one another and inform one another as to the sailings of any vessels for England.³ At this time the only sailings which could be relied upon with certainty were those of the mast fleet from Maine and the tobacco fleet from Virginia. Postmaster Campbell of Boston announces in the "News-Letter" of October 28, 1706, that all post-paid letters which had been received from New York and elsewhere had been delivered to the mast fleet just before it sailed from Piscataqua.⁴

Though the office was no longer operated under the grant to Neale, but was controlled by the British postal authorities, the various colonies continued to pass acts for its establishment and encouragement. Most of these provided for the continuance of the institution for a number of years and for an allowance to be paid from the public funds. These payments seem to have been regarded as compensation to the postmasters for the considerable service rendered by them in the free transmission of public and official letters.⁵ The size and the expense of transmitting such correspondence made it a heavy burden upon the post office, the receipts of which did not begin to meet the charges. Campbell

¹ *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, v, 55.

² See p. 22, *ante*. Cf. Hemmeon, 118 ff.

³ Weeks and Bacon, *loc. cit.*, 334, 335.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁵ Statements to this effect are frequently found in acts of legislatures appropriating money for the support of the post office.

told the Massachusetts General Court in 1709 that the service between New Hampshire and Pennsylvania cost the post office in England £200 a year and would cost yet more if the officials were paid.¹

In 1711 an act was passed by the British Parliament for the purpose of reorganizing and consolidating the postal system in all the British Dominions.² It was expected to raise from this source a steady revenue for war expenses. Instead of the two offices of England and Scotland, the entire establishment was put under the control of a postmaster at London, while chief letter offices under deputy postmasters general were established in Edinburgh, Dublin, and in New York and the West Indies.³ It was provided that £700 per week out of the gross receipts, and one third of the revenue in excess of £111,461 17s.10d., should be at the disposal of Parliament for military purposes. The figure chosen represents the total income of the office for the year ending September 29, 1710. Somewhat less than £75,000 per year was allowed for the expenses of the entire service, and no specific provision was made for the colonial post.

In addition to making these plans for the disposal of the revenue of the office, the Act of 1711 gave specific directions for rates of postage. The most important of those for the colonies were as follows:

		s.	d.
London to New York	single letter	1	0
West Indies to New York	"	0	4
New York to New London	"	0	9
" " " Philadelphia	"	0	9
" " " Boston, Newport, Portsmouth	"	1	0
" " " Salem, Piscataway, Annapolis	"	1	3
" " " Charleston	"	1	6

Rates were fixed in a similar manner with regard to other centers, and general rates were fixed on the basis of 4d. for any distance up to 60 miles, or 6d. for a distance between 60 and 100 miles.⁴

Several other regulations were included in the act, with a view to removing some of the defects which had arisen in the service.

¹ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 70.

² *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 75-78.

³ 9 Anne, c. 11.

⁴ 9 Anne, c. 11. Cf. Hemmeon, 144.

It was provided that ship-captains must deliver their letters to the postmasters at the port towns, where they should get a written receipt for them and be paid at the rate of one penny per letter. A penalty of £5 was fixed for failure to comply with this requirement. In order to prevent evasion of postal charges, the rule with regard to excepted letters was made more specific. All letters must be sent by means of the post office except

such letters as shall respectively concern goods sent by common known carriers of goods by carts, waggons or pack-horses and shall be delivered with the goods which such letters do concern, without hire, or reward or other profit or advantage for receiving or delivering such letters; and . . . letters of merchants, masters or owners of any ships, barques or vessels of merchandise, or any [of] the cargo, or loading therein sent on board such ships," etc.

In spite of the explicit provisions of this act, there was constant evasion, as the complaints of postmasters abundantly show.

The office thus established by authority of Parliament was put into operation in most of the colonies without causing any great stir. Usually the passage of the act was noted and its provisions repeated in the laws of the various colonies. In Virginia, however, a serious opposition developed on the ground that the establishment of rates by the British act constituted taxation of the colonies without their consent. The House of Burgesses refused to grant any supplies of money for the office, insisting that these had sufficiently been established by act of Parliament. They further fixed such laws for the office as to make its operation practically impossible. Their controversy with Governor Spotswood on this point lasted for several years. In 1718 he wrote to the Lords of Trade that the people insisted on regarding the fixing of rates as taxation and held the Act of 1711 void. They had fixed a fine of £5 for any postmaster who should take into the post office a letter of the sort excepted under the act, and the difficulty of telling just what letters ought to be excepted had effectively limited the service. In addition such routes and times for the carrying of letters had been fixed, under extravagant penalties, that the office could not be operated.¹ It is interesting to note the first appearance of the protest against postal rates as taxation about fifty years before such views became common in the colonies.

¹ Off. Let. Spotswood, ii, 280, 281.

Under the new act there was no change in the Deputy Postmaster General in America. John Hamilton continued to act in this capacity until 1730. The service was slowly improved but showed no great extension of the routes. There was a weekly mail from Portsmouth to Philadelphia about 1711, but it was not extended to Virginia much before 1730. Further south the difficulty of traveling and the temper of the North Carolina men kept South Carolina detached from the other colonies.¹ But though the service was extended and the amount of correspondence increased, the office was by no means self-supporting until after 1750. In part this was due, no doubt, to evasion of postage and to lax administration, but the cost of the service was still great in comparison with the receipts. From contemporary records we can get an idea of the condition of the office at this time. It was customary to pay postage on receipt of letters, not on sending them, and usually postmasters were willing to trust men for a reasonable length of time. We find frequent notices in the Boston "News-Letter" that such a date is "quarter-day," and that all postal arrears must be settled at that time or further credit will be denied.² As the postmaster was usually the publisher of the newspaper, this threat was generally effective. Sometimes it was not, as in the case of Andrew Hay, who published the following notice in the "American Weekly Mercury" for October 23-30, 1735:

This is to give notice to all persons in Town and Country that are indebted to Andrew Hay, Postmaster at Perth Amboy, for the postage of letters to Pay the same or they may expect Trouble (*sic*); some having been due near four years.
signed, AND. HAY.³

The work of a postmaster is indicated by the notice which Campbell published in the Boston "News-Letter," May 31, 1714:

The Post Office in Boston is opened every Monday morning from mid-March to the middle of September at seven o'clock to deliver out all letters that do come by the post until twelve o'clock. From twelve to two o'clock, being dinner hour, no office is kept. In the afternoon it is opened from two to six o'clock to take in all letters to go by the south and west post, and none to be taken in after that hour, excepting for the post and till seven at night.⁴

¹ Doyle, *English Colonies in America*, v, 76.

² Dec. 7, 1713, and *passim*. See quotations in Weeks and Bacon.

³ Quoted in N. J. Arch., I, i, 436.

⁴ Quoted in Currier, 64.

A map published in 1715 with the title, "A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain on the Continent of America," gives "an account of the posts of North America, as they are regulated by the Post Masters General of the Post House." From it we learn that the post from Philadelphia left that city for New York every Friday by way of Burlington and Perth Amboy. Arriving in New York on Saturday night, the post did not leave there for Boston until the following Monday morning. His route lay along the shore of Long Island Sound, through New Haven to Saybrook, where on Thursday he met the rider from Boston and exchanged bags with him. The latter had also set out on Monday, and on his way served the towns of Bristol, Stonington, and New London. North of Boston there were offices at Salem, Marblehead, Newbury, and Portsmouth.¹

In 1717 Jonathan Dickinson, of Pennsylvania, wrote:

We have a settled post from Virginia and Maryland unto us and goes through all our northern colonies, whereby advices from Boston unto Williamsburg in Virginia, is completed in four weeks from March to December and in double that time in the other months in the year.²

But the service was still irregular, especially during the winter months, when storms and delays at ferries threw the riders out of their usual schedule.³

Such was the state of affairs when Alexander Spotswood became Postmaster General for America, in 1730. He was a man of experience, having been Governor of Virginia, where he had taken an active part in the exploration of the country beyond the mountains and in the attempts at settlement of the interior. He contracted with the British authorities to manage all the American posts for a salary of £300 per year for ten years, plus 10 per cent of the clear profits of the establishment.⁴ Inasmuch as all his salary was to be paid out of the revenues of the American office, it is difficult to see how he could have expected large profits. During the nine years that he was at the head of the office its growth was

¹ Cf. Whitehead, *Hist. Perth Amboy*; Palfrey, iv, 330 n.

² Quoted in Watson, *Annals of Phila.*, ii, 392.

³ Cf. Quotation from *Phila. Gazette*, in Watson, ii, 392.

⁴ Cal. T. B. and P., 1729-1730, 314, 318.

slow. The troubled state of the colonies, and especially of the western country, is a sufficient explanation of this.

The most notable of Spotswood's official acts was the appointment of Benjamin Franklin to be Deputy Postmaster at Philadelphia. This was in 1737, and from that time until the Revolution the name of this famous American was closely connected with the post office. Not long after his appointment to the Philadelphia office he became, as he himself tells us,¹ "comptroller," and was charged with the oversight of several offices. From this position he passed in 1753 to be Postmaster General.

In 1739 Spotswood was succeeded in office by Head Lynch, who continued as Postmaster General until 1743, and was followed by Elliot Benger, of Virginia. There is little to note in the history of the office during the administrations of these two men. Postage was still collected on the delivery of letters, and credit allowed by the postmasters, as indeed it continued to be for many years subsequent to this period. It had become the almost universal custom for the postmasters to be publishers of newspapers. The reason for this was that no provision had been made in any of the postal laws for the admission of newspapers to the mails, nor had any rates been established for their carriage. It was, therefore, customary for the postmasters to publish papers and circulate them by means of the post riders, and to see that the riders carried no other papers.²

The Boston "News-Letter," the first paper published on this continent, was started by Campbell, Postmaster, in the form of a news-letter actually written out by hand and circulated each week by means of the post. In this plan he had the hearty approval and assistance of the Massachusetts authorities. When he retired from office, he continued the publication of this sheet, but was forced to meet the competition of his successor in the post office, who had started the "Gazette."³ Franklin himself, newspaper publisher that he was, saw clearly the advantages of such an arrangement. He wrote in his "Autobiography" concerning his appointment to the Philadelphia office:

¹ *Writings*, Smyth ed., i, 385, 386.

² On this point see Thomas, *Hist. of Printing*, *passim*.

³ Duniway, *Freedom of Press in Mass.*, 76, 90.

I accepted it readily and found it of great advantage; for though the salary was small, it facilitated the correspondence that improved my newspaper, increased the number demanded, as well as the advertisements to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a considerable income.¹

Nevertheless Franklin, when he became Postmaster General, introduced one much-needed reform in admitting all newspapers to the mails.²

From William Douglass, who wrote in 1749, we get the following table of the length of post roads in the various colonies at that time:³

	<i>miles</i>
Eastern Division of Massachusetts Bay	143
New Hampshire	20
Western Division of Massachusetts Bay	89
Rhode Island	58
Connecticut	126
New York	57
New Jersey	54
Pennsylvania	78
Maryland	144
Virginia	215
North Carolina	247
South Carolina	310
	<hr/>
	1,541

From the same writer, as well as from other contemporary sources, we get some additional light upon the conditions of the office. Douglass, for instance, tells us that the law which required ship-captains to deliver up all their letters to the postmasters at the ports had become a dead letter, chiefly owing to the large number of letters exempted by law and the chances of fraud thus afforded.⁴ We have also the testimony of a traveler arriving at Philadelphia after a voyage from London, to the effect that many of the inhabitants came on board the vessel and took their own letters. The remainder were taken to a coffee-house to be kept until called for.⁵ The service from Portsmouth to Philadelphia was fairly reliable at this period, but farther south it was very irregular, because the rider did not start for Williamsburg until he

¹ Ford, *Many-sided Franklin*, 334.

² See p. 37, post.

³ *Summary*, i, 471.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁵ Watson, *Annals of Phila.*, ii, 392.

had received enough letters to pay the cost of the journey. Beyond Virginia the mails went as far as Charleston, but yet more irregularly.¹

—In 1753 Benger, the Postmaster General, died, and his death served to bring to the establishment the man who proved to be not only its most interesting character but the best business manager in the whole history of the colonial office, Benjamin Franklin. The whole story of Franklin's connection with the service is noteworthy, but in particular it seems worth while to dwell at some length upon one or two special points. The first of these has to do with the manner in which the office was obtained.

There has grown up around Franklin, as around so many notable men, a crop of myths. One in particular has to do with his holding of the Postmaster-Generalship. The Doctor himself said many times that he had never sought office for himself, and most of his biographers have repeated the same thing. The fact of the matter is, however, that in the instance now before us he not only sought the office, but did so with great haste and persistence. In 1751 news reached him that Elliot Benger was ill, probably dying. With all speed, thereupon, he made arrangements to get the place and wrote to Peter Collinson as follows:

The occasion of my writing this *via* Ireland is that I have just received Advice that the Deputy Post Master General of America (Mr. Elliot Benger residing in Virginia) who has for some time been in declining Way is tho't to be near his end. My Friends advise me to apply for this Post and Mr. Allen (our Chief Justice) has wrote the enclos'd to his Correspondent, Mr. Simpson, in my favour requesting his Interest and Application in the Affair and empowering him to advance a considerable Sum if necessary.

I have not heretofore made much scruple of giving you Trouble when the Public Good was to be promoted by it, but 't is with great Reluctance that I think of asking you to interest yourself in my private Concerns as I know you have little Time to spare. The Place is in the Disposal of the Post Masters General of Great Britain with some of whom or their Friends you may possibly have Acquaintance. Mr. Allen has desired Mr. Simpson to confer with you on the Affair and if you can without much Inconvenience to yourself advise and assist in endeavoring to secure the Success of this application you will whatever may be the event add greatly to the Obligations you have already conferred on me: and if it succeeds I hope that as my Power of doing good increases my Inclination may at least keep pace with it. I am quite a Stranger to the Manner of managing these applications so can offer no par-

¹ Douglass, i, 466.

ticular instructions. I enclose a copy of the Commission of a former Deputy Post Master General which may be of some use. The Articles of Agreement referred to in the Commission I have never seen but suppose they have always been nearly the same whoever is appointed, and have been usually sent over to America to be executed by the New Officer; for I know neither of the last two Officers went to England for the Commission. The Place has commonly been reputed to be worth about £150 a Year, but would otherwise be very suitable to me, particularly as it would enable me to execute a Scheme long since form'd of which I send you enclosed a Copy, and which I hope would soon produce something agreeable to you and to all lovers of Useful Knowledge for I have now a large Acquaintance among ingenious Men in America. I need not tell you that Philadelphia being the Center of the Continent Colonies and having constant Communication with the West India Islands is by much a fitter Place for the Situation of a General Post Office than Virginia, and that it would be some Reputation to our Province to have it established here. I would only add that as I have a Respect for Mr. Benger I should be glad the Application were so managed as not to give him any offence if he should recover. But I leave everything to you and Mr. Simpson, referring you to Mr. Allen's letter to that Gentleman for further particulars, and am dear Sir, Your affectionate humble Serv't,

B. FRANKLIN.

P. S. I have heard that £200 was given for the office by Mr. Benger and the same by his Predecessor. I know not whose Perquisite it was. But lest that should not be sufficient and there may be some contingent fees and Charges Mr. Allen has offered £300. However, the less it costs the better as 't is an office for Life only which is a very uncertain tenure.¹

This interesting letter was apparently unknown to the earlier biographers and editors of Franklin. It appears first in the edition of Franklin's works by A. H. Smyth, and it is in the same writer's "Life of Franklin"² that account is first taken of the effect of this in modifying our view of the modest Doctor who never sought public office for himself. The thing which gives the keenest point to the whole story is that Benger did not die in 1751 as he was expected to, but lived on until 1753. At that time, however, Franklin reaped the fruits of his carefully laid plans, for he and William Hunter of Virginia were appointed joint Postmasters General for the colonies, the first time that two men had ever been appointed to this office. Hunter died in 1761 and was succeeded by John Foxcroft of New York, who served until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Thus the office passed into the hands of two experienced men,

¹ *Writings*, Smyth ed., iii, 48-50.

² *Ibid.*, x, 172 ff.

for Hunter had served as deputy postmaster in Williamsburg, Virginia.¹ There was need for the greatest energy in bringing the service into anything like satisfactory shape. In addition it behooved the new Postmasters General to exert themselves if they were to gain any financial return from their positions. The terms of their appointment allowed each of them £300 per year out of the profits of the office, but there had never yet been any profits. The reason for this condition is not far to seek, for there is every evidence that the service was thoroughly demoralized. For example, John Franklin wrote to Benjamin, on November 26, 1753, shortly after his appointment:

The office of General Postmaster being divided, you observe very much diminishes the profits, but I think if the post riders were regulated according to law you 'd find the profits amount to more than the whole in case the General Postmasters' income is regulated by the number of letters and all the post riders practice the same with him that rides the Portsmouth stage.

He then related how this particular rider habitually carried only four or five letters in his bag, but "a tableful" for his own profit.² It was probably a typical performance; for though there was a considerable volume of communication, the office was £900 in debt to the Postmasters General at the end of four years. After that, by dint of continuous efforts to improve and expedite the service, better results began to come; and soon regular payments were being made into the British Treasury.

There are abundant materials in the records of that time from which to reconstruct a picture of the postal service. The mail moved but once a week between Boston and New York in summer, while in winter it went but once a fortnight.³ There was no post office between New York and New London, and the proceeds of all way-letters were the perquisites of the riders. In order to keep their towns in touch with the outside world, the people of Hartford and Middletown hired a rider to go down the Connecticut Valley and meet the regular post at Saybrook; but this was a private enterprise.⁴ About 1755 an office was opened at New Haven, with a local newspaper publisher as postmaster. The lat-

¹ Huebner, 132.

² Currier, 66.

³ F. P., I, fol. 22.

⁴ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 2, xvi, 206, 207.

ter tried to improve the circulation of his paper by hiring a rider to go to Hartford, but found that he could not make it pay with the newspapers alone. He therefore applied to Franklin to get authority to carry letters.¹

Franklin set himself to change all this. He made a long tour of inspection, visiting all the offices in the north, and as far south as Virginia. New surveys were made, new and shorter routes laid out, and the speed of travel increased on some of the old lines. Milestones were set up on some of the principal roads, as, for instance, on the route between Boston and Philadelphia. By making the mails travel at night between Philadelphia and New York, a letter sent from one place to the other could receive an answer on the following day.² This service was given by mails leaving Philadelphia every other day, and in conjunction with a change in the service from New York to Boston, brought it about that, as one writer records, "answers may be obtained in three weeks which used to require six weeks."³

There were, however, still some complaints concerning the service, but most of them came from the south. In 1762 Governor Dobbs wrote to the Board of Trade that his letters, coming by way of New York, had been usually three or four months, and sometimes as long as twelve months, on the journey from that place to North Carolina. He considered the post riders to be very careless, and the whole system to be very unsafe.⁴ In similar vein Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia wrote to the Lords of Trade that the posts were not properly fixed, and that it took his letters five or six weeks to come from New York.⁵ But even in these colonies much of the inconvenience was removed by the efforts of Franklin and his associates, Hunter and, later, Foxcroft.

¹ In the north little complaint was heard, the only noteworthy protest coming from Governor Boone of New Jersey, and he was unable to make out a good case for his objections. In 1761 he wrote to the post-office authorities in England that Franklin had altered the post road through New Jersey in such a way as to put

¹ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 2, xvi, 207.

² *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., iv, 214, 215.

³ Watson, *Annals of Phila.*, ii, 393.

⁴ *N. C. Col. Recs.*, vi, 733.

⁵ *Dinwiddie Papers*, ii, 314.

Burlington, his official residence, off the main line. Boone intimated that this had been done out of pique.¹ It was very easy for Franklin to dispose of the charge by showing that the change had been made under the administration of Spotswood, and also that it had transferred the post road to a newer, easier, and better road, with no real hardship to the Governor, since Burlington was adequately served by a cross post.² The letter which he wrote to Henry Potts, in the General Post Office, London, gives interesting glimpses of the state of the American office, and especially of some of the obstacles which had to be overcome. In particular, the ferries were troublesome, since many, like the ferry from New Jersey to New York, were very wide and the ferrymen were inclined to be dilatory. They were accustomed to seek every excuse for delaying the mails until they had passengers traveling in the same direction. Nor was this surprising, since they were not paid for transporting the post rider and were supposed to ferry him without delay.³

In 1763 Franklin once more toured the colonies, visiting every office in the north, while Foxcroft made a trip to the south in 1764.⁴ The latter succeeded in getting some coöperation from the Assembly of North Carolina, which voted £133 colonial currency (about £67 sterling) for the support of the office.⁵ It was proposed to establish a service once a fortnight between Williamsburg, Va., and Charleston, S. C., but the difficulties were obviously very great. Next to the lack of good roads, the absence of large towns or even of good inns and post houses was the most serious obstacle. It was necessary to ride one horse 200 miles on some parts of the road before a fresh one could be obtained. The route approved ran by way of Edenton and Brunswick to Charleston, the whole distance from Williamsburg being estimated at 480 miles. The plan was good enough, but the route was not operated with any regularity for many years after this time. In the north, Franklin's efforts were directed to an attempt to speed up the posts beyond New York by making them travel day and night be-

¹ *N. J. Arch.*, I, ix, 249.

² *Ibid.*, 265-269.

³ *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., iv, 100-105.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 214, 375.

⁵ Cf. letter of Governor Tryon to Lord Hyde, one of the Postmasters General, *N. C. Col. Recs.*, vi, 1057-1060.

tween that place and Boston. By this means he expected to make it possible to receive answers from Boston to Philadelphia in six days instead of the three weeks then required.¹ But this plan was not at once realized.

In other directions the postal service was greatly improved. In 1755 a packet line was established direct from England to New York. This was recommended by Franklin and Hunter, but had been suggested before this time by the Lords of Trade, who had found much difficulty in obtaining a sure communication with the governors of the various provinces.² They had been accustomed, for the sake of safety, to send from three to five copies of each letter and packet addressed to the governors. These were sent by separate vessels, but even then it sometimes happened that all the letters were lost.³ For the packet service four vessels were provided, of about 200 tons, with a crew of thirty men and armament of six carriage-guns and four swivels. It was expected that they would make the round trip between Falmouth, England, and New York in about four months.⁴ In 1768 a line was also established from Falmouth to Charleston, giving the Southern colonies direct communication with England. These were withdrawn in 1782, but the New York packets continued to run until after the Revolution.⁵ Although these boats were sure, they were not fast, for we find Franklin complaining in 1770 that they were slower than merchant ships, and also that they had slighted the excellent chart of the Gulf Stream and the currents of the North Atlantic which he had made for them.⁶

In another field Franklin made a great improvement in the post office. We have already mentioned that up to this time no provision had been made for admitting newspapers to the mails, and that they could be carried only by arrangement with the post riders. It was quite the custom for the postmaster-publisher to keep this important advantage for himself. Franklin had suffered under this sort of treatment while his rival at Philadelphia had the office, and was accused of having turned his power in this direc-

¹ *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., iv, 214, 215.

² Cf. *N. J. Arch.*, I, viii, pt. 2, 138, 139.

³ Dickerson, 137-141.

⁴ Smyth, *Life of Franklin*, x, 175, 176.

⁵ Ernst, *L'Union Postale*, xx, 178.

⁶ Cf. Ford, *Many-sided Franklin*, 380, 381.

tion to his own advantage.¹ But if he ever did this, and he denies it, he soon adopted a wiser and more liberal policy. In 1758 he sent out instructions to his deputy postmasters, that, inasmuch as papers carried free by riders were becoming burdensome, and the riders were apt to make exorbitant charges upon subscribers, all newspapers were to be admitted to the mails at fixed rates of postage. The aim was, he said, "to remedy these inconveniences and yet not discourage the spreading of newspapers which are on many occasions useful to Government and advantageous to Publick." For newspapers going not over 50 miles the rate was 9*d.* sterling, or its equivalent in currency; from 50 to 100 miles, 1*s.* 6*d.*, and so on in proportion.²

Under such management, and with so great improvements in the service, it is not surprising that we find satisfactory financial results beginning to appear. Franklin's account of the finances of the post office for the first years of his management is as follows:

	1753-56		
	£	s.	d.
Receipts.....	938	16	10
Disbursements.....	1617	4	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Deficit.....	678	7	2
	1756-57		
	£	s.	d.
Receipts.....	1151	10	11
Disbursements.....	1416	19	10
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Deficit.....	265	8	11
Total deficit, 4 years.....	943	16	1
	1757-60		
	£.	s.	d.
Receipts.....	3368	18	6
Disbursements.....	2147	11	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Surplus.....	1221	7	6
	1761		
	£.	s.	d.
Surplus.....	216	13	3
Total surplus first eight years.....	494	4	8 ³

¹ Cf. *Min. Prov. Council of Penn.*, vii, 447. ² Smyth, *Life of Franklin*, x, 174, 175.

³ *Journals of Hugh Gaine*, i, 38-39, quoted from *Mercury* of May 20, 1758.

This remittance in 1761 was noted in the official records of the British Post Office with the following comment:

The Deputy Postmasters have already obeyed the Postmasters General by remitting £494 4s. 8d. in full payment of their Balance up to the 10th day of August, 1761, and this is the first remittance ever made of the kind.¹

Between 1761 and 1764 the office earned a still larger surplus of £2,070, and in the fiscal year 1768-69 the receipts were £3,285, and the expenses but £1,426, leaving £1,859 profit for that one year.² Such remittances as these caused the Postmasters General to record that "the posts in America are under the management of persons of acknowledged ability."³ Franklin wrote at the time of his dismissal, in 1774, that the office was then producing three times as much revenue as the Irish post office.⁴

Attentive to all matters pertaining to the postal service, Franklin wrote to the Postmasters General in 1764 that ship letters were charged 2d., but that in his opinion the office would gain if the charge were reduced to 1d. He further suggested a general lowering of rates, and the basing of these on distance or mileage rather than on stated journeys, such as from Philadelphia to New York, for example.⁵ In accordance with this advice, the Act of Parliament of 1765 reduced rates of postage about 30 per cent.

The period of Franklin's administration of the post office saw several important changes in the state of the colonies. The danger from the French, which had been serious in the earlier days, became less with the reduction of Canada by the English forces about 1760. But before this there came the defeat of Braddock and other checks to the British arms. The military operations called for communication between the armies and the seaboard, and in response to this need Pennsylvania established a post for Braddock from Philadelphia to Winchester, Va.⁶ Massachusetts also established a post to communicate with the troops in the field, service from Boston to Albany being instituted in 1760.⁷ With the return of peace Franklin tried to hold all the extension

¹ Smyth, *Life of Franklin*, x, 175.

² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vi, 191, 192.

² *Ibid.*, 176, 178, 179.

⁵ F. P. L (ii); folio 37.

⁶ *Min. Prov. Council of Penn.*, vi, 321: *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., i, 393.

⁷ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 87.

which the postal service had gained by reason of these field posts. He wrote to George Washington of Virginia that the Pennsylvania Legislature would not keep up the post to Winchester, and that the letters did not meet expenses; wherefore he desired to have the Virginia Assembly pay for the service from Carlisle to Winchester.¹

In 1765, after the addition of Canada and Florida to the British dominions, the colonial posts were divided into two districts, each under the immediate control of the General Post Office in London. The Northern District, which extended from Quebec to Virginia, was continued under the management of Franklin and Foxcroft. The Southern District, with headquarters at Charleston, included the two Carolinas, the Floridas, and the Bahama Islands. The Postmasters General of this District were Benjamin Barrows, from 1765 to 1766, Peter De Lancey, 1766 to 1771, and George Roupell, 1771 to 1782.² While the Northern District was prospering, the Southern, with much poorer roads and sparser population, was struggling to maintain a respectable service, wholly unable to return any revenue to the British Post Office. We can trace much of this in the *Colonial Records* of North Carolina. In 1769 Governor Tryon wrote to Postmaster General Barrows, giving a route from Suffolk, Va., across his colony to the boundary of South Carolina, 297 miles. This, he said, would avoid large ferries and would be the shortest road on which there was accommodation for the riders.³ In another letter to Peter De Lancey he gave the names of men recommended to keep post houses along the road. Buchell's (Cotton Ferry), Edenton, New Bern, Willmington, and Brunswick were suggested as offices.⁴ In 1768 Tryon spent £157 out of his own pocket trying to secure the regular carriage of his official letters;⁵ but on January 10, 1769, he was able to write that he had received the first regular mail from Charleston, and that a service once a month had at last been established.⁶ But even this seems not to have been regular, for Tryon wrote to Earl Hills-

¹ *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., iii, 343.

² Ernst, in *L'Union Postale*, xx, 177, 178.

³ *N. C. Col. Recs.*, vii, 148, 149, 166, 167.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 439, 440; 454, 455; 700, 701.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 654, 666.

⁶ *Ibid.*, viii, 3.

borough on September 5, 1769, that the post had not yet been put in operation for want of means to support it. He suggested that the route be transferred to the Northern District and carried by it until it should become self-supporting.¹

This suggestion was not followed, however. Instead the colonial legislatures were urged to pass acts for the encouragement and support of the office. North Carolina passed such an act in 1771, providing that the post rider was to pass all ferries without delay and that the ferrymen were to receive double fare for this service. It was further provided that, in case of accident, the nearest person was to carry the mail along, to be paid at the rate of 1s. per mile. This last provision caused the act to be protested and disallowed by the Lords of Trade.²

In spite of all these measures the post office in the South did not prosper. In North Carolina the roads were so bad that no cross posts could be established, and only the irregular mails along the coast were in operation.³ To add to its troubles, the office was often subjected to the competition of interlopers, private post riders, more rapid and more regular than the public posts.⁴

The Act of Parliament of 1765,⁵ to which we have already made reference, introduced considerable changes in the office. Some of these we have already noted, others pertained to the rates of postage. The preamble of the act set forth the importance of the security and improvement of correspondence between England and America, as well as all His Majesty's dominions, for the preservation of trade and commerce. It added that "by the late treaty of peace, several communications have been opened, and new posts established in several parts of His Majesty's Dominions in America, for which the postage cannot, under the present laws, be properly ascertained."⁶

The new rates of postage established were as follows:

	<i>d.</i>
Any distance up to 60 miles	4
60 to 100 miles	6
100 to 200 miles	8
Each additional 100 miles	2

¹ *N. C. Col. Recs.*, viii, 66.

² *Ibid.*, 383, 478; ix, 287, 288.

³ Lodge, *Hist. Eng. Col.*, 156.

⁴ *N. C. Col. Recs.*, vii, 205.

⁵ 5 Geo. III, c. 25.

⁶ Cf. Holmes, *Annals of America*, ii, 140.

These rates were for single letters, double and treble letters paying rates in proportion.¹ Apparently these lowered rates did not at all lessen the revenue of the office, the increase in correspondence serving to offset the lower return per unit.

Under this new act Franklin and Foxcroft were reappointed Postmasters General for the Northern District. The commission to them recited that it was granted by His Majesty

reposing especial trust and confidence in Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia and John Foxcroft of New York, Esquires, and having received good testimony of their fidelity and loyalty to His Majesty and of their ability and sufficiency to manage and better regulate the posts in the continent of North America and of their inclination and capacity to improve and advance His Majesty's revenue therein.²

Foxcroft resided in the colonies and was very active in the management of the posts; but Franklin was much of the time in England, having accepted the position of Agent for Massachusetts to secure the repeal of the Stamp Act. This activity of his, coupled with his long absences from the country where he held office, finally cost him his place.

In the meantime events were moving rapidly toward a crisis in the relations between the colonies and the mother country. The Stamp Act had aroused a storm of protest, and Franklin was in England to give expression to that protest and to secure if possible the repeal of the obnoxious measure. Before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1766, he was sharply questioned as to the attitude of the Americans toward taxation. Asked about the post office, he was very guarded in his replies. The post was a revenue-producing institution, he admitted, but it was not regarded as an instrument of taxation. On the contrary, he said it was looked upon, "not as a tax but as a regulation and expediency; every assembly encouraged and supported it in its infancy, by grants of money, which they would not otherwise have done; and the people have always paid the postage."³ The post roads were mostly along the seacoast and only in a few instances went into the back country. Newfoundland had no post routes at all, and the post

¹ 5 Geo. III, c. 25; Holmes, *Annals*, ii, 140; Whitehead, *Hist. of Perth Amboy*, 276.

² Quoted in Smyth's *Life of Franklin*, x, 177.

³ *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., iv, 448.

road between Montreal and Quebec was the only one in Canada.¹ In such case, when a letter was directed to a person living beyond the line of posts, it was carried to him by his friends, and the postage was paid only for the distance it was actually transported by the office. Thus the postage was not regarded as a tax, but "as a sort of *quantum meruit* for service rendered." A man might still employ a private messenger if he chose to do so.²

Such was the burden of Franklin's testimony in England; but the actual conditions in the colonies were rather different, and he probably knew that as well as anybody. In 1766 Parker, his comptroller of the post office, wrote to him that the "Sons of Liberty" were making ship-captains deliver their letters at the coffee-houses instead of at the post office as they were required to do by law. When arguments failed to convince the captains, force was employed. The post office had become a "grievous instrument of taxation."³

It was in the midst of such excitement as this that Franklin was dismissed from office. The blow fell in 1774, but was by no means unexpected. There had for years been unfavorable comment in London over Franklin's absentee direction of the American Post Office. Smyth, in his "Life of Franklin,"⁴ quotes a letter of 1768 finding fault in this particular. Franklin knew it was coming, as can be seen in his letters as early as 1767.⁵ The real motives were probably mixed, dissatisfaction with the state of the office and with Franklin's management being joined to a desire to punish him for his activities in behalf of Massachusetts. He himself was very bitter about it, and wrote to Thomas Cushing that he had been discharged for political reasons, in spite of the fact that his efforts alone had made the office worth anything to the British Treasury. He felt that it was the beginning of a wholesale cleaning out of the office, in which all patriotic Americans would be turned out of their places, which were daily becoming more valuable to the holders as the commissions increased with the growth

¹ *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., IV, 415, 416.

² *Ibid.*, 430, 442, 443.

³ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 2, xvi, 211, 217.

⁴ x, 178.

⁵ Cf. *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., v, 32, 143, and *passim*.

of business. More important, however, than the financial question involved was the control over the means of communication thus secured, since the British law allowed the postmasters to open any letters at the order of the Secretary of State or of the Secretary of the Province.¹

Ideas like this were coming more and more to possess the leading men in all the colonies, and the disorganization of the postal system was rapid. In 1773 Hugh Finlay was sent out by the British Post Office as "Surveyor of the Post Office," to travel through America and make a report on the state of the office. His journal has been preserved and furnishes important evidence as to the condition of affairs at this time. On all sides disregard for the laws of the post office was widespread. Post riders jogged leisurely along their routes, stopping often to transact some business with which they had been intrusted. Many of them found a lucrative employment as general carriers, making purchases and delivering packages for their clients entirely outside of their regular duties in the office.² Finlay records meeting one post driving some oxen which he had undertaken to deliver for a customer. All sorts of bundles were carried, often stuffed into the mail-bags, much to the detriment of the letters carried therein. Each and every bundle was accompanied by a letter which the riders asserted concerned the contents of the same. These were their perquisites, as well as the numerous way-letters.³

Where stages had been introduced conditions were similar. Some years before this time a line of coaches had been started between Boston and Portsmouth. As the proprietor, one Stavers, was found to be hurting the post office, he was taken on the payroll. This arrangement not only furnished regular through mails once a week, but also yielded some revenue to the office over and above Stavers's salary of £10 per year.⁴ In 1773 there were many stages on that route and they materially diminished the revenues of the post office. There is nothing strange in this, since the stage drivers either gave letters to the passengers to carry, or else tied

¹ Cf. *Writings of Franklin*, Smyth ed., vi, 191, 192. This had been allowed, apparently as a war measure, under the grant of the British post office to O'Neale in 1663, and was confirmed in the law of 1711. Hemmeon, 26, 46, 47.

² *Journal of Hugh Finlay*, 38.

³ *Ibid.*, 39, 40, 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

them to sticks or bundles of straw and carried them without regard to the office.¹

But the chief defiance of law, as Finlay found it, came in connection with the packets. Of these he wrote:

There's two or three vessels in constant employment between Boston and Falmouth (Casco Bay); they are called packets, each of them makes about twenty trips yearly; and every trip they carry many hundreds of letters. Mr. Child (the Deputy at Falmouth) once attempted to put the law in force and took the letterbag of one of those vessels to the office, but it made such a bustle and noise in town that he dared never attempt it again. The masters of the vessels say, that each letter accompanies a package of freight, and that they will not deliver them to the postmaster for that reason: It's well known that not one letter in ten accompanys goods: Yet the law is so defective that the act can never be put into force.²

When such conditions as these prevailed, there would seem to be some ground for complaint on the part of the British Post Office against a Postmaster General who joined to the fault of long absences from the scene of his duties the further fault of sympathy with the rebellious Americans. But movements even more detrimental to His Majesty's post office were already on foot, for there were several proposals put forward in 1773 and 1774 for an American postal service, independent of the British.

The most notable of these came from William Goddard, a Baltimore printer. He had been postmaster at Providence, R. I., under the British Post Office, and was in 1773 publishing the "Maryland Journal," through whose columns he first brought forward his scheme for what he called a "Constitutional Post Office." The existing institution he attacked on two grounds: first, because of the insecurity of correspondence, and second, because it was "unconstitutional," being an instrument by which the colonists were taxed without their consent.³ With regard to the first part of the charge there was undoubtedly much to be said. In many parts of the colonies men were already, through secret committees, laying the foundations for the structure of revolt which soon arose. There was constant danger that their plans might be discovered through the interception of letters by the postmasters. But if letters were at the mercy of the post office,

¹ *Journal of Hugh Finlay*, 17, 18.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, i, 500.

the same was much more true of newspapers.¹ In the months of February, March, and April, 1774, Goddard made a tour of New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts in the interests of his plan. Everywhere he met with favorable responses to his proposals.² In the "Journal" for July 2, 1774, he announced that his project needed only the support of Maryland and Virginia to make its realization certain.³

The scheme presented to the various colonial leaders was based on the laws and regulations of the British Post Office, with which Goddard was familiar, and provided for a complete system of intercolonial service. The following were submitted as "Model Rules" for the establishment:

1. That subscriptions be opened for the establishment of a post office and for the necessary defense of post offices and riders employed in the same.

2. That the subscribers in each colony shall annually appoint a committee from among themselves whose business it shall be to appoint Postmasters in all places within their respective Provinces, where such offices have hitherto been kept, or may hereafter be judged necessary, and to regulate the postage of letters and packets and the terms on which newspapers are to be carried; which regulations shall be printed and set up in each respective office.

3. That the Postmasters shall contract with and take bonds with sufficient securities, of suitable persons to perform the same duty as hath hitherto been performed by post riders subject to the regulation and controll of the committee.

4. That the several mails shall be under lock and key and liable to the inspection of no person but the respective postmasters to whom they shall be directed, who shall be under oath for the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in them.

5. That a Postmaster General be annually chosen by the vote of all the Provincial Committees enclosed and sent to the Chairman of the New York Committee, who, on receiving all the votes, and giving one month's publick notice in all the New York papers, of the time and place appointed for that purpose, shall open them in committee in the presence of all such subscribers as choose to attend, and shall declare the choice, which choice shall be immediately communicated to all the other Provincial Committees by a certificate under the hand of the said Chairman.

6. That the Postmaster General be empowered to demand and receive the accounts from the several postmasters throughout the colonies connected with this post office and shall adjust and liquidate the same, and by his order transfer in just proportion the surplusage of one office to make good the deficiencies of the other, if any such should appear, and in case of a deficiency

¹ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, i, 501, 502.

² Cf. *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 89.

³ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, i, 500.

of the whole, he shall have power to draw for the same upon the several committees in proportion to the amount of the subscription in their departments; and at the year's end transmit to the said Committee a fair and just account of the whole post office under his inspection.

7. That the several postmasters be charged — per cent on all moneys received into their respective offices for their services; and also — per cent for the use of the Postmaster General which they shall submit to him quarterly with their accounts.

8. That whatever balances may remain in the hands of the several postmasters after all charges are paid shall, by the direction of the subscribers in the Province or Provinces where such postmasters reside, be appropriated to the enlargement of the present institution within their respective Provinces.¹

B { By the spring of 1775 the breach between England and the colonies had been widened by the skirmish at Lexington and soon the revolt was full grown. The Continental Congress undertook the direction of the affairs of the colonies, and soon felt the need of an independent postal establishment. On May 29, 1775, it appointed a committee, with Franklin at the head, to perfect the organization of the same.² In the meantime several of the colonies had acted upon their own initiative, following the plans proposed by Goddard.

On April 28, 1775, the Committee of Safety at Boston recommended the establishment of an independent postal service,³ and on May 13 the Provincial Congress, acting on this advice, provided for post routes from Cambridge to Georgetown, Lincoln County, Haverhill, Providence, R. I., Worcester, and Falmouth, Barnstable County. A road was also to go by way of Worcester and Springfield to Great Barrington. Fourteen towns were named for post offices, extending from Falmouth on Casco Bay in the north, to the shores of Cape Cod in the south.⁴ Rates of postage were established as follows:

¹ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, i, 502-504. It is to be noted that no revenue was intended to be raised from this office. All surplus was to be put back into the service. This was also the guiding principle of the later postal establishment under the Articles of Confederation.

² *Ibid.*, 4, ii, 1839.

³ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 3, vii, 89.

⁴ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, ii, 802-803.

		s.	d.
Under	60 miles		5 $\frac{1}{4}$
60 to	100 "		8
100 to	200 "		10 $\frac{1}{2}$
200 to	300 "	1	1
300 to	400 "	1	4
400 to	500 "	1	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
500 to	600 "	1	9
600 to	700 "	2	
700 to	800 "	2	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
800 to	900 "	2	5
900 to	1,000 "	2	8

These rates, payable in lawful money of the colony, were for single letters. Double and treble letters were to be charged in proportion.¹

New Hampshire also at this time established an office at Portsmouth.² A list of "Goddard's Post Offices," dated May 18, 1775, shows a pretty complete chain from Portsmouth to Williamsburg, Va. Every colony north of the Carolinas was represented by at least one office, and communication was established between all the leading towns except Boston, which was in the hands of the British. Cambridge and New York were connected by two routes, one by way of Worcester, Springfield, and Hartford, and the other through Providence, New London, and New Haven, the road formerly traveled by the Royal posts.³ Between Philadelphia and New York the riders were supposed to go twice a week, meeting at Princeton to exchange bags.⁴ The competition of the "Constitutional Post" had killed the service of the British office, for we learn from a letter dated at New York, May 4, 1775, that the Postmaster General (Foxcroft) had discharged his riders for lack of funds.⁵ We have no record of the financial condition of the new office.

¹ *Amer. Arch.*, 4, ii, 803.

² *Ibid.*, 651.

³ *Ibid.*, 536-538.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 538.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 506.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE AMERICAN POST OFFICE, 1775-1789

THE Continental Congress was on the threshold of a great struggle in May, 1775. It was necessary that the best and speediest system of communication obtainable be put into operation to insure the needed coöperation between the colonies. In this case men turned naturally to the man who had been signally successful in the management of the posts for more than ten years. Franklin served on the committee (appointed on May 29) which on July 26 brought in a plan for the establishment of a general post office. The resolve of Congress setting up the office is as follows:

That a Postmaster General be appointed for the United Colonies, who shall hold his office at Philada. and shall be allowed a salary of 1000 dollars per an. for himself and 340 dollars per an. for a secretary and comptroller, with power to appoint such and so many deputies as to him may seem proper and necessary.

That a line of posts be appointed under the direction of the Postmaster General from Falmouth in New England to Savannah in Georgia, with as many cross posts as he shall think fit.

That the allowance to the deputies in lieu of salary and all contingent expenses shall be twenty per cent on the sums they collect and pay into the Post Office annually, when the sum is under or not exceeding 1000 dollars and ten per cent for all sums above 1000 dollars a year.

That the rates of postage shall be twenty per cent less than those appointed by the Act of Parliament.

That the several deputies account quarterly with the general post office, and the Postmaster General annually to the Continental Treasurer, when he shall pay into the receipt of the said Treasurer the profits of the Post Office; and if the necessary expense of this establishment should exceed the produce of it, the deficiency shall be made good by the United Colonies, and paid to the Postmaster General by the Continental Congress.¹

On the same day Benjamin Franklin was unanimously elected Postmaster General for the term of one year, or until another should be appointed.² The appointment of the secretary and

¹ *J. C. C.*, ii, 208, 209.

² *Ibid.*, 209.

comptroller was left in his hands. Goddard, who had promoted the "Constitutional Post," was given his choice of becoming postmaster at either Baltimore or Norfolk, or of being Surveyor to the Post Office, and chose the latter office.¹ In this capacity he made a tour of several colonies, as we learn from the "Virginia Gazette" of Williamsburg for September 1, 1775. We read that

this day William Goddard, Esq., Surveyor to the Continental Post Office, arrived at this city on a tour of the several United Colonies to establish offices in the principal towns and other commercial places under the authority of Benjamin Franklin, Esq., who was appointed Postmaster-General by the honorable Continental Congress: and as soon as the officers are commissioned and the routes fixed, the establishment will immediately take place.²

As comptroller Franklin named Richard Bache, his son-in-law; and when Franklin went to France as Agent of the colonies, Bache stepped into the vacant place of Postmaster General, on November 7, 1776.³

Viewed in the large, the problems before the office were but two in number. First, and of much the largest importance, was the problem of keeping a sure and speedy line of communication open between Congress and the armies in the field. The chief efforts of the Department had to be directed toward meeting this need. After that, it must attend as best it could to the maintenance of as good a service as possible to keep the various colonies in touch with one another, and to facilitate the small correspondence that continued in spite of the war. The first service, to the army, was often costly and sometimes hard to keep up, but in the main it was well performed. Of necessity, however, the other work of the Post Office suffered. During the war many of the important towns, especially along the coast, were at one time or another in the possession of the British troops. The important mail routes were constantly interrupted, and the volume of correspondence was so shrunken that the office was continually struggling to find funds enough even to pay its riders.

The first rates established had been the same as those under the British Post Office; but on September 30, 1775, these were sus-

¹ Thomas, *Hist. of Printing*, i, 325.

² Quoted in Huebner, 137.

³ *Amer. Arch.*, 5, iii, 1536.

pended on the ground that they would not yield a revenue sufficient to pay the riders.¹ Nevertheless the members of Congress were determined to enjoy all the privileges of officials under the old office, for on November 8 it was provided that all letters and packets sent by or addressed to the delegates should be free during the sessions of Congress. This privilege was soon extended to the generals in command of the armies, and later to the privates in the ranks.² It is typical of the man that Benjamin Franklin used to frank his letters with the signature "B. Free Franklin."³

We find record in the papers of the Continental Congress of constant attempts to render more safe and sure the communication with the armies. In December, 1775, an express service, for public despatches only, was provided from Cambridge to Philadelphia by way of Hartford, Dobbs Ferry, and New Brunswick. The riders were to travel day and night and receive pay at the rate of 12*d.* per mile, Pennsylvania currency, in winter, or 8*d.* per mile in summer.⁴ In order to remove all possible causes of interruption of service, postmasters and post riders were exempted from all military duties.⁵ The next year, 1776, another resolve sought to improve the service still more by providing the employment of one rider for each 25 or 30 miles, with regular service three times a week. State assemblies were urged to coöperate with the General Post Office in regulating routes and service within their territories. Three "advice boats" were provided for, one from each of the three most southerly colonies, to carry despatches to Congress. They were to be armed and have good speed. In addition to the mails they were to carry such freight as they might without delaying their journeys, since this would help to meet the expenses of the service.⁶

¹ *J. C. C.*, iii, 267. The resolve of July 26, 1775, had provided that rates should be 20 per cent lower than those formerly prevailing, but this reduction does not appear to have been made. See p. 53, post.

² *Ibid.*

³ An example may be seen in a letter to Mrs. Franklin; Frank. Papers, MS., lxxviii, fol. 59.

⁴ *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 451.

⁵ *J. C. C.*, v, 526, 638.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 719, 720. For other attempts to speed up the service between Congress and the army, cf. *ibid.*, vi, 927, and *Amer. Arch.*, 5, i, 1561, 1625.

Late in the year 1776 Bache succeeded Franklin as Postmaster General, and Goddard, the Surveyor, quit the service. It was said that he was disgruntled because he was not appointed comptroller in Bache's place when the latter was promoted.¹ However, his work in the important position he held had not been very commendable. Bache wrote of him that "whilst in office [he] did business in a very careless and slovenly manner."² One of his exploits will serve to illustrate this. In the winter of 1776 he had been sent by Bache to fix the posts between Philadelphia and the armies. Meeting Washington in retreat across New Jersey, he at once returned to Philadelphia, without having perfected any arrangements at all. It was this which precipitated his resignation.³

Ebenezer Hazard, who had been postmaster at New York and had followed the army to Fishkill, was Goddard's successor, and he brought much energy to the task. In January, 1777, Bache told Congress that Hazard had gone to the eastward to try to establish posts. The British troops were then in possession of most of the post roads, and the only communication with the north was by way of the back parts of New Jersey.⁴

In February, 1777, a further attempt was made to improve the Post Office. Congress divided the service into two districts and appointed a surveyor for each. The Northern District of the "grand line of posts" was to extend from Philadelphia, by way of Easton, Fishkill, Hartford, Boston, and Portsmouth, N. H., to Falmouth, on Casco Bay. The Southern District included the road through Annapolis, Williamsburg, Halifax, N. C., Wilmington, and Charleston, to Savannah. It was intended to establish a service twice a week over the full length of this line. For this purpose \$5,000 was voted to the Postmaster General. The salary of the surveyors was fixed at \$500 a year, with \$200 allowed for traveling expenses in the Northern and \$300 in the Southern District.⁵

It was hoped that by this means regular mails could be secured and that regular speed could be made, for the riders were ordered

¹ Thomas, *Hist. of Printing*, i, 325.

² *Ibid.*, fol. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

² *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 445-447.

to make at least 100 miles in 24 hours, traveling day and night.¹ In reality the service fell far short of these expectations. In 1776 a letter from General Charles Lee from Virginia complained that the post was very irregular and that it took a letter six or seven weeks to come from Philadelphia.² In the same year a letter to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, said that the posts were

very irregular, and answered no purpose of intelligence from the army nor a quick communication between the several states and with Congress, which in times like the present are highly necessary and to effect which was the reason of that regulation. It is of great importance that this business should be put on such a footing as to answer effectually the end intended.³

Thomas Jefferson was very exacting in his expectations regarding postal service. In May, 1777, he wrote to John Adams, complaining of the irregularity of the post. Adams replied in defense of the office, saying:

A committee on the post office have found a thousand difficulties. The post is now extremely regular from north to south though it comes but once a week. It is very difficult to get faithful riders to go oftener. And the expense is very high and the profits, so dear is everything, and so little correspondence is carried on except in franked letters, will not support the office. Mr. Hazard is now gone southward, in the character of surveyor of the post office, and I hope will have as good success as he had eastward, where he put the office in very good shape.⁴

While the Post Office was thus haltingly trying to serve the needs of the country, its financial condition was rapidly passing from bad to worse. Nor does it seem reasonable to blame any of the high officials for this poor showing. Bache was filling his post acceptably and Hazard was certainly active enough as surveyor, but the institution lacked all those conditions which make for large revenues. Peace and security, easy communication, and flourishing commerce alone can make a postal system self-supporting, and the Continental Post Office had none of these favoring circumstances. As to rates, some fault may be found with the policy pursued, but the receipts of the office were not much affected by the increased rates until the later years of the war.

¹ *J. C. C.*, viii, 153, 154.

² *Amer. Arch.*, 5, i, 719.

³ *Ibid.*, iii, 1356.

⁴ *Works of John Adams*, C. F. Adams ed., ix, 467.

The original rates proposed in the resolve of July 26, 1775, were to be "20 per cent lower than those fixed by the Act of Parliament,"¹ but those actually put into operation were the same as those fixed by the Act of 1765.² There is still in existence a broad-side issued by Benjamin Franklin to his deputy postmasters giving the rates of postage between the several offices in America. Rates were quoted in pennyweights and grains of silver, as follows:

	dwt.	gr.
Not over 60 miles	1	8
60 to 100 "	2	0
100 to 200 "	2	16
200 to 300 "	3	8
300 to 400 "	4	
400 to 500 "	4	16
For each additional 100 miles	0	16 ³

According to the reckoning of 3*d.* to each pennyweight of silver, these correspond exactly to the old rates. But the proceeds of the office at these rates fell far below the cost of the service, and matters grew worse instead of better as time went on.⁴

Congress made numerous vain attempts to help out the office. While prices rose, as the paper money depreciated, and postal receipts declined, it was hard to obtain good and faithful riders and postmasters. Congress on several occasions tried to make it possible for the office to run with some ready money on hand. On April 12, 1777, \$2,000 was advanced to the Postmaster General for this use.⁵ In October of the same year rates of postage were raised 50 per cent, as "the present profits of the office fall far short of the expense created by it." At the same time two additional surveyors were appointed, at a compensation of \$6 per day "in full consideration of traveling expenses and all other allowances."⁶ An inspector of dead letters was also created, with a salary of \$100 per year. Among his other duties he was to communicate to Congress any letters which came into his possession containing schemes inimical to the United States.

During the years 1776 to 1778 the receipts of the office were

¹ See p. 48, *ante*.

² See p. 40, *ante*.

³ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 13, 14.

⁵ J. C. C., vii, 258.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ix, 816, 817.

but £11,140 and the expenses £12,393, showing a deficit of £1,253. This included Bache's unpaid salary for the period, £750.¹ In January, 1779, the Postmaster General reported that, notwithstanding the increase in rates, the receipts of the office had declined steadily since the first year of its operation. In the meantime, the service was badly crippled because of the debts owed either to the riders or to the postmasters who had advanced money to them. Worst of all, prices had risen greatly so that Bache wrote: "We are now obliged to pay about eight times as much to our riders as was paid them in the first year of the establishment and even then the proceeds of the Post Office fell far short of paying the expenses."² In these conditions he desired authority to draw on the Continental Treasury each quarter for the needed money. Congress, however, preferred to vote specific sums.

On April 16, 1779, \$6967 was voted to the Postmaster General to pay the debts of the office, and \$5000 additional "for the recurring expenses of his department, to the end that, dealing with ready money, he may be enabled to make the best bargain for the public." The rates of postage were doubled, making the second substantial increase since the outbreak of the war. At the same time the compensation of all the officials was doubled, so that the Postmaster General received \$2000, the Comptroller \$680 per year, and the surveyors \$12 per day.³ Six months later another deficit had arisen, in spite of other votes of money, and the accounts showed £375 due the Postmaster General and £17,666 due the riders "according to the nearest computation that the Comptroller can make." In this crisis \$40,000 was voted to the Postmaster General and his salary was raised to \$3,500, while the Comptroller's was raised to \$2500.⁴ In December, 1779, the rates of postage were made twenty times those of 1775, and still more money was advanced to the Postmaster General,⁵ bringing the total during the year to \$101,967.⁶

Still the office continued to be in a serious condition. Riders were unpaid and becoming disaffected, some even engaging in the

¹ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 9-11.

² *Ibid.*, fol. 13, 14.

³ J. C. C., xiii, 463, 464.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xv, 1203.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1411, 1415.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1436.

business of carrying letters for their own profit. Even the expresses carrying public despatches did this at times.¹ In the ports ship-captains did not deliver their letters to the post office, while inland the roads were growing worse, and some of the legislatures were not inclined to appropriate anything for the support of the office.² In May, 1780, the rates of postage were once again doubled, and a resolve was passed requiring all shipmasters to deliver their letters to the post office immediately upon their arrival in port.³ During the year 1780 the sums paid from the Treasury to the Post Office amounted to \$163,000.⁴

All this increasing of rates and salaries did not help the office. The Continental currency in which these were calculated was so much at a discount as to remove all significance from the sums named in the various acts. Thus we find Surveyor Hazard reporting on October 6, 1780, that his compensation was, indeed, \$40 per day, but his expenses for board and lodging for himself and horse cost him \$289 Continental, or 7-2/90 hard dollars.⁵

— In this state of affairs an attempt was made to bring things to a specie basis. It should be remembered that circumstances had forced Congress to issue paper money, at first as a means of financing the impending conflict, later because of the failure of the states to contribute under the system of requisitions. Between the years 1775 and 1779, the issues amounted to \$241,552,780. In addition to this the various states had issued \$209,524,776 of their own paper currency.⁶ From 1776 to the end of 1778 the depreciation of the paper money was fairly gradual, but thereafter the value of the currency rapidly declined, until it became practically worthless in 1780.⁷ Congress finally readjusted salaries upon a specie basis, scaling down that of the Postmaster General to \$1000 and that of the Comptroller to \$500 in "specie or other money equivalent."⁸ On December 12, 1780, the surveyors were voted a salary of \$586²/₃ per year and traveling expenses at \$4 per

¹ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 63.

² Cf. *N. C. Col. Recs.*, xiii, 395, 396.

³ *J. C. C.*, xvi, 413, 414.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xviii, 1223.

⁵ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 55.

⁶ Dewey, 36, 37. On the whole episode of the Continental paper money, cf. Bullock, *Finances of the U. S.*

⁷ Dewey, 39.

⁸ *J. C. C.*, xviii, 822, 823.

day. This was made effective from September 1, 1777. Post riders also were to have made up to them the losses suffered through the depreciation of the currency, and were to be paid at double the rates given before the war. Having tried the effects of higher rates of postage, Congress now tried the opposite course, and rates (in specie) were fixed at one half of those before the war.¹ But this policy was soon given up, if indeed it ever went into effect; and on February 24, 1781, the rates were fixed at double those of the British Post Office.²

In August, 1781, the Committee of Congress on the Post Office was ordered to confer with the Postmaster General and the Superintendent of Finance in regard to the improvement of the establishment. On October 19, the Committee made a report on the state of the service and presented several recommendations. The first of these was the abolition of the franking privilege, which was putting a heavy burden on the struggling office. To this Congress was not willing to agree; but the other measures brought forward by the committee were approved, and provision was made for putting the new laws into effect December 1. A reduction in the rates of postage was recommended, as well as the dismissal of all express riders. The new establishment was postponed to January 1, 1782,³ and shortly afterwards to February 1.⁴ Meanwhile Bache was replaced as Postmaster General by Hazard, on January 28.⁵ One of the first acts of the new Postmaster General was to suggest to Congress the propriety of a new act, codifying and revising the organic law of the Post Office.⁶

The new ordinance was passed October 18, 1782, and with the supplementary measures of October 28 and December 24, 1782, formed the basic law of the Department down to 1792. The spirit of the framers of this law may be seen from the preamble:

Whereas, the communication of intelligence with regularity and dispatch from one part to another of the United States is essentially requisite to the safety as well as the commercial interest thereof; and the United States in Congress assembled being, by the Articles of Confederation, vested with the sole and exclusive right and power of establishing and regulating post offices

¹ *J. C. C.*, xviii, 1142.

² *Ibid.*, xix, 191.

³ *Ibid.*, xxi, 1066, 1067.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxii, 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶ *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 105.

throughout all these United States: and whereas it is become necessary to revise the several regulations heretofore made relating to the post office and reduce them to one act —

The ordinance was comprehensive indeed. It disposed in one act of the questions of internal organization, mail routes and service, rates of postage, and penalties for offences against the United States mail. Its provisions contained little that was novel, being largely the result of the experience under the British Post Office, slightly modified by the occurrences of the war times. The intent, as indicated in the preamble just quoted, was clearly to give the central government power not only over interstate postal operations, but also over service within the borders of the various states. It was provided that

a continued communication of posts throughout these United States shall be established and maintained under the direction of the Postmaster General of the United States, to extend to and from the State of New Hampshire and the State of Georgia inclusive, and to and from such other parts of these United States, as from time to time he shall judge necessary, or Congress shall direct.

It was further ordered that "the Postmaster General . . . shall . . . direct the Post Office in all its various departments and services throughout the extent aforesaid."¹ The chief officers provided for were the Postmaster General and an assistant or clerk. The former was to be paid \$1500, the clerk \$1000. A regular service was to be maintained at least once a week to and from each of the post offices to be established under the ordinance.

The duties of the Postmaster General included the appointment of the clerk or assistant and of all subordinate officers, deputy postmasters, and post riders, as well as the fixing of their commissions and salaries. All postal officials, from the Postmaster General down to the riders, were to take an oath for the faithful performance of their duties. A reminiscence of the troubled times at the outbreak of the Revolution was seen in the provision that, except in time of war, no letters might be opened or destroyed save at the express order of the President of Congress. In this, as in so many other matters, the practice of the British Post Office was adopted.² To ensure a monopoly of the office it was provided

¹ *J. C. C.*, xxiii, 670.

² Hemmeon, xviii, 46, 47.

that no persons other than specially engaged messengers, on public or private business, might carry letters or packets for hire outside of the post office. Ship-captains were bound to deliver the letters brought in their ships to the offices in the ports at which they touched, and were to receive one ninetieth of a dollar for each letter so delivered. Failure to comply with this provision was punishable by a fine of \$20 for each offence.

Rates of postage were fixed as follows:

	<i>dwt.</i>	<i>gr.</i>
Up to 60 miles	1	8
60 to 100 "	2	0
100 to 200 "	2	16
For each additional 100 miles	0	16

These rates were for single letters, those for double or treble letters being in proportion. Packets weighing one ounce or more were rated as four letters. A letter to or from Europe was chargeable with 4*dwt.*, to which was added 4/90 of a dollar if the letter was not brought in a packet or despatch vessel. No specific charges were provided for the transmission of newspapers in the mails, but it was provided that the Postmaster General "shall and may" license post riders to carry newspapers

at such moderate rates as the Postmaster General shall establish, he rendering the post riders accountable to the Postmaster General or the respective deputy postmasters by whom they shall severally be employed, for such proportion of the moneys arising therefrom as the Postmaster General shall think proper, to be by him credited to these United States.¹

In other words this provision aimed to promote the circulation of newspapers by allowing the riders to carry them at a fixed commission. The provision is quite different from that made concerning the carrying of letters, and, indeed, it is doubtful whether the newspapers were considered to be carried in the mails.

The office was intended to be of public service rather than a source of revenue, for it was definitely provided in the Articles of Confederation that "the United States in Congress shall . . . have the power of . . . establishing and regulating the post office from one state to another throughout all the United States, and exacting such postage on the papers passing through the same as may be requisite to defray the expenses of the said office."² It was

¹ *J. C. C.*, xxiii, 677.

² Art. VII, sec. 4. Cf. *Stat.*, i, 7.

therefore provided that any surplus which might arise was to be put back into the office, in the betterment and extension of postal facilities. First of all, however, the sums already advanced from the Treasury were to be repaid, with accrued interest at 6 per cent. The office must be self-supporting, and to secure this end postmasters were directed not to deliver letters unless the postage on them had been paid, though this provision seems largely to have been ignored and private arrangements still secured credit at the post office. The franking privilege was also considerably curtailed.¹ Two supplementary ordinances were found necessary before this postal code was complete. The first, passed on October 28, 1782, fixed the amount of commissions allowed to the deputy postmasters at 20 per cent, and amplified some other parts of the law.² The second, passed December 24, made some slight extensions of the franking privilege.³

Thus the Post Office was put under a complete and carefully revised code and a new era of prosperity seemed to be before it. There had already been signs of improvement, in the last days of Bache's administration. Early in 1782 it was reported to Congress that a payment of \$1,981 had been made to the Treasury, which brought the total paid in discharge of the debts of the office to \$5,878.⁴ With the coming of Hazard to the head of the institution still further good things were expected, for he had succeeded in reducing the cost of post riding by £350, Pennsylvania currency, and this in spite of the extension of the service to the southward. In the first six months of his administration the office made \$202 above expenses.⁵

The Post Office had at this time extended its lines as far south as Savannah, and the part of this line north of Petersburg, Va., seemed to be self-supporting.⁶ In 1783 the Postmaster General reported that the office was in a flourishing condition. The revenue was increasing and the people seemed satisfied. Only a few problems remained to be solved. The people had been used

¹ *J. C. C.*, xxiii, 670-679.

³ *Ibid.*, 830.

² *Ibid.*, 688, 689.

⁴ *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 529.

⁵ *J. C. C.*, xxiii, 547, 548. Cf. *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 517.

⁶ Cf. Letter of Hawkins and Williams to Governor Martin, *N. C. Col. Recs.*, xvi, 736, 737.

to private posts during the war and it was hard to enforce the monopoly of the public office. Especially where the stages ran, as between New York and Philadelphia, letters were being carried in violation of law; but Hazard expressed the hope that the successful issue of a suit which had been started by the Department would put an end to this. With regard to ship letters, he recommended the adoption of the provisions of the British law, whereby no vessel was allowed to discharge her cargo until her captain had presented a receipt from the postmaster showing that the letters she carried had been delivered to him according to law.¹

On the whole the energies of Hazard were bent toward the development of the inland service rather than the overseas business, though this latter was early thrust upon his attention. In connection with their packet services both France and England had established agents and offices at New York; but though some excitement was caused by the first discovery of this, their relations to the American Post Office were soon adjusted.² What little American competition there was in this field soon disappeared, and the packet service remained entirely in foreign hands. The French line from L'Orient to New York lasted until the French Revolution, and the British packets plied between Falmouth and New York until the coming of the Cunard steamers.³ The only difficulties which arose were concerned with the keeping of accounts between the countries involved. In 1784 this was settled with England by the arrangement that all letters sent by the British packets were to be paid as far as New York or they would not be received by the American office.⁴ Inasmuch as these vessels brought in the bulk of the foreign mails, this arrangement was most satisfactory, and it was soon extended to the French packets as well.

Continued efforts were being put forth to improve the service by land. By 1785 stages were used in almost all parts of the main line, or "great post road" as it was called. From the Kennebec in Maine to Charlestown, Mass., twenty riders carried the mails,

¹ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 183, 184.

² Cf. *ibid.*, fol. 151, 177.

³ Cf. Ernst., *loc. cit.*, 182, 183.

⁴ See Circular of Anthony Todd, Sec. of British Post Office, in P. C. C., lxi, fol. 193.

but between Boston and Portsmouth the stage was employed. In most parts of the line weekly service was maintained, but between New York and Philadelphia three mails a week were transported in stages which traveled day and night and made the journey in 22 hours. From New York to Albany the mail was still carried but once a fortnight.¹ Various resolves of Congress in 1785 directed the Postmaster General to inquire into the cost of stage transportation with a view to extending it as widely as possible.² Hazard accordingly invited bids for such service, informing the contractors, among other conditions, that the mail must be carried in the stage in a place that was waterproof and secured by lock and key.³ As a result of the bids submitted he was able to report to Congress in December, 1785, that for the year 1786 he had made provision for the transportation of the mail in stage coaches from Portsmouth, N. H., to Savannah, and from New York to Albany, three times a week in summer and twice a week in winter. The contract price of this service amounted in all to \$19,600.⁴

The improvement in service thus secured was great, but still the conditions were not at all ideal. The mails had to be kept moving and the law allowed a stop of but fifteen minutes at small offices and only two hours at the larger ones.⁵ In spite of the laws to the contrary, stage drivers carried letters outside the mails for their own private profit. Sometimes the hours set by the Post Office were inconvenient for the stages, and spoiled their chances of carrying passengers. Often the mail was carried very irregularly, and sometimes was left behind altogether. On occasion even the important mails of the main line were treated in very careless fashion. Hazard told Congress of one occasion when the mail from Philadelphia to New York was allowed to lie unguarded over night in the ferry boat at the latter city. It was found by a fifteen-year-old negro boy, who, being ignorant of its character, took it to a house, where it lay for some hours before it was discovered to be the mail and finally delivered to the post office.⁶

¹ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 211, 225-229.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 263-265.

² J. C. C., old ser., x, 154, 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 263.

³ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 207-209.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 241, 259, 260, 269.

In spite of all these defects there was a considerable improvement in the service, and Congress directed that the contracts for the year 1787 should be made for the transportation of the mails in stages wherever practicable, certainly on all parts of the "great post road." For the better service of the interior, numerous cross-posts, or minor post roads, were provided. Boston was to be connected with Concord, N. H., and a road established from thence to Portsmouth; Springfield and Albany were to be joined, and a road from New York to Danbury and thence to Hartford served to open up western Connecticut. Other roads were fixed between Baltimore and Annapolis, Md., Philadelphia and Bedford, Pa., Wilmington and Fayetteville, N. C., Camden, S. C. and Augusta, Ga. Even a post road to Pittsburgh was provided for. As many of these roads were not expected to be productive, they were to be farmed to contractors for the term of seven years or less. Rates charged on these were not to be in excess of those fixed by law for the government service.¹ Thus was introduced into the American Post Office a device which has been of great assistance in developing the postal service, the private post road. The condition for the establishment of these roads was always that they were not to create any financial burden upon the Post Office, but that the contractor was to get his remuneration out of the net proceeds of the roads.

During this period the Post Office, being an affair of the whole Confederation, was brought occasionally face to face with the problem of the rights and powers of the various states. In June, 1786, for example, the question was raised as to what sort of money was legal tender for postage. Hazard instructed his deputy postmasters not to receive the paper money of the various states, and appealed to Congress for support. This was readily given, a resolve being passed to that effect;² but then a new difficulty presented itself. In many parts of the country, especially in the South, no other sort of money was to be had. The Postmaster General suggested various expedients: increasing the rates of postage in such places, to make the return equivalent to specie, or the payment of postage in advance on letters addressed to these

¹ *J. C. C.*, old ser., x, 213, 214.

² *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 255; *J. C. C.*, xi, 118.

districts.¹ Congress adopted the latter suggestion and directed the deputy postmasters to receive nothing but specie for postage.²

Another problem in the relations between the states and the Confederation was brought into prominence when a resolve was introduced into the Maryland legislature appointing a State Postmaster General, on the ground that Congress had no jurisdiction over the post offices not situated on the main road.³ Under such conditions a new ordinance governing the Post Office was deemed necessary. This contained the first clear statement of the monopoly of the United States in regard to the Post Office which is to be found in any of our laws. It declares that

the United States in Congress assembled are invested with the sole exclusive right of establishing and regulating post offices from one state to another throughout the United States and exacting such postage on the papers passing on the same as may be requisite to defray the expense of the said office.⁴

The net proceeds of the office were to be devoted to extinguishing the Post Office debt and then to establishing cross-posts "throughout and within the several states and in the Western country or new states as the United States in Congress assembled may judge proper."⁵ Also, on the consent of nine states, some of the money might be spent for the building and maintenance of packets and vessels of war.⁶ Hazard suggested a reduction of the letter postage by about 25 per cent, and also a new plan for newspapers. These were to be charged 2/90 of a dollar for each 50 miles.⁷

The subject of printers' exchanges had begun even then to be a perplexing question. Hazard felt that each printer might be allowed to send one copy of his paper to each other printer, and that these might travel free, at least as far as the next capital city. If more than this were allowed, he felt that free newspapers would become a great burden to the mails. He presented to Congress a simple calculation, showing how the operation of this rule would mean the free transportation of 283 newspapers on the road between Portsmouth, N. H., and Philadelphia. There were then

¹ *J. C. C.*, xi, fol. 379.

² *Ibid.*, old ser., xi, 227.

³ *P. C. C.*, lxi, fol. 391.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 545.

⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 547.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 548.

⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 407, 411.

twenty-six newspapers printed along that road, seven each at Boston and Philadelphia and four at New York.¹ On October 20, 1787, Congress made the reduction in letter postage, and also empowered the Postmaster General to fix rates per pound for the carriage of packets with a view to attracting these to the mails.² The next year newspapers were admitted to the cross-posts.³

The most important attempt of the Post Office in this period to extend its service into the country beyond the seaboard came with the establishment of the post to Pittsburgh. Congress made provision for this service in 1787 as a cross-post, by contract if possible, at government expense if no other plan could be devised. A proposal was received for a service by the way of Alexandria, Va., Leesburg, Winchester, Fort Cumberland, and Bedford; but it was never put into effect as the contractor disappeared.⁴ At last the route was established, July 3, 1788, from Philadelphia by way of Lancaster, Yorktown, Carlisle, Chamberstown, and Bedford. As far as Chamberstown the mail was to be carried once a week by the riders, beyond that once in two weeks.⁵

As has already been intimated the financial condition of the Post Office improved steadily throughout the period. In 1784 the receipts were \$11,291, the expenses \$4,264, and the surplus \$7,026. Of these sums the receipts of the leading offices were as follows: Baltimore, \$3,595; Philadelphia, \$2,626; Boston, \$2,184, and Portsmouth, N. H., \$1,250. New York does not figure in this list.⁶ The steady growth in the next few years is shown by the following table:

Date	Receipts	Transportation of mails	Contingent expenses	Salaries	Surplus
1785	\$29,598	\$13,700	\$620	\$2,500	\$5,220
1786	27,096	13,277	226	2,500	10,730
1787	29,243	21,426	251	2,500	1,839
1788 (first quarter)	6,649	4,927	70	650	929 ⁷

The year 1788 saw the office in good order and apparently meeting the people's needs. Much regularity had been secured

¹ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 415, 416.

² J. C. C., old ser., xii, 211.

³ P. C. C., lxi, fol. 567.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 314.

⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 331, 571, 572.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 231-233.

⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 581-583.

over most parts of the "great post-road" and the part north of Virginia was self-supporting. The chief complaint had to do with newspapers, which had always been a troublesome problem for the Post Office. The irregularity of delivery, especially on the cross-posts, was very trying to men in the thrilling days when the fate of the new Constitution was still in the balance. In the midst of the excitement it was charged that Hazard had put into effect his long-threatened suppression of the printers' free exchanges. At once a great cry was raised that this was being done to obstruct the progress of the Constitution.

We find illustrations of this in George Washington's letters. On July 18, 1788, he wrote to John Jay:

It is extremely to be lamented that a new arrangement in the Post Office unfavorable to the circulation of intelligence should have taken place at the instant when the momentous question of a general government was to have come before the people.

He further commented that the practice was old and valuable to the community. He censured Hazard for substituting horseback for stage transportation of the mails, and pointed out the advantages of the latter means of travel. "It has been understood by wise politicians and enlightened patriots," he wrote, "that giving a facility to the means of traveling for strangers and of intercourse for citizens was an object of legislative concern and a circumstance highly beneficial to any country."¹ But the criticism seems too harsh, to say the least; for Hazard had had much experience with the stages and well knew their unreliability. He was apparently seeking the good of the service.²

Hazard himself stoutly denied that he had given any such order as that with which he was charged.³ On May 17, 1788, he wrote to his friend Jeremy Belknap:

It was natural enough for printers in distant parts of the Union to suppose, if their papers came irregularly, that it was owing to some unfriendly regu-

¹ *Writings of Washington*, Ford ed., xi, 290, 292.

² *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 5, iii, 44. Hazard claimed that he took the Eastern mail away from the stages because the proprietors asked \$3014, as against \$1790 bid by the riders for the same service. His experience showed transportation of the mails by stage was not so sure as the older method.

³ *Ibid.*, 38, 39.

lation in the post office, especially when it was asserted by a brother printer near the headquarters of the Union; but what surprises me is, that the printers did not see the improbability of the charge brought against the P. M. G., which was that he prohibited the circulation of newspapers containing anti-federal pieces, while he promoted that of those which contained federal. To do this, he must of course examine all the papers that were published, which would fully occupy all his time and put it out of his power to do any part of his proper business.¹

The whole affair was to his mind merely a part of the strong and continuous movement to displace him from the office, of which he had been conscious for a long time. All through the year 1788, with a wealth of circumstantial evidence which increased as the months passed, Hazard's letters to Belknap told of the progress of the efforts against him. Even the names of hostile members of Congress appear in the correspondence.² Clearly he had aroused the violent opposition of two powerful classes, the printers and the stage-owners, though he himself was inclined to think that personal ambition was a large motive. Late in 1788, when it had become clear that his days at the Post Office were numbered, he wrote:

I have reason to believe that somebody, believing in the philosophical doctrine of solidity, is fully satisfied that 2 bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time; and, having a partiality for the space I occupy, wishes to get me out of it that he may get in. Who it is I know not, but suspect, from what has happened, that it may be one of my masters; somebody, I dare say, who never risked his neck *pro bono publico*, as I did in 1776, and afterwards, but sees something tempting in a public station now, and more especially under the new Constitution.³

Hazard recognized three candidates for the office, Richard Bache, Tench Coxe, and Colonel William Smith, in addition to Samuel Osgood, to whom possibly he referred in the foregoing letter as "one of my masters."⁴ Bache was the son-in-law of Benjamin Franklin, and had been Postmaster General from 1776 to 1782; Tench Coxe was a resident of Pennsylvania, and Colonel

¹ *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 5, iii, 44. ² *Ibid.*, 35, 63-65, 67-68, 191-193. ³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴ The Post Office had been under the direction of the Treasury Board under the old arrangements. It is only a conjecture that Hazard here referred to Osgood, for he wrote a year later, at the time he was displaced, that he had not considered Osgood as a serious rival, though his wife had often insisted that she had reliable information that he was seeking the office. Cf. *ibid.*, 193.

Smith was son-in-law of John Adams. Osgood, who had been a member of the Treasury Board, and had given satisfactory service in that capacity, was the successful aspirant, replacing Hazard on September 27, 1789. He was thus the first Postmaster General to be commissioned after the adoption of the Constitution.

Such was the American Post Office when the Constitution was put into operation. A small service, but growing in size and efficiency. There were about 75 offices and 2400 miles of post road to serve a population of 3,000,000. Certain clear defects are to be seen. The rates of postage were too high, and the office was too weak to enforce its monopoly. In addition, the discipline of the force was lamentable. It seemed impossible to enforce either proper adherence to rules or strict accountability in financial matters. Nevertheless, the Post Office of 1789 was in embryo the office of to-day. Its main lines of policy had nearly all been laid down and its basic rules established.

CHAPTER V

EXTENSION OF POSTAL SERVICE, 1789-1829

CONGRESS was too busy in the early years of the new government to work out any new plan for the Post Office, so kept intact the system which had grown up under the Confederation. A succession of temporary acts kept this in operation until 1794, when the first complete revision of postal laws was made.¹ The unsatisfactory character of the temporary establishment is seen in the writings of the leading men of the time. Washington, in frequent passages of his annual messages to Congress, called attention to the services of the Post Office in spreading throughout the country a knowledge of the actions of the Government. In 1791 he told Congress that

the importance of the post office and post roads on a plan sufficiently comprehensive as they respect the expedition, safety and facility of communication is increased by their instrumentality in diffusing a knowledge of the laws and proceedings of the Government, which, while it contributes to the security of the people, serves also to guard them against the consequences of misrepresentation and misconception.²

To this end he urged Congress to establish more cross posts, especially in the northern and western parts of the country.³

An adequate idea of the Post Office in 1792 may be gathered from the following quotation from a letter of Postmaster General Pickering to von Beseler, Postmaster General of Hamburg:

Post Offices are established not only in all the principal commercial places in the United States but at almost all the small ports; and where they do not fall on the main line, cross posts are established. We have also many post towns in the interior country; by these means our Post Roads extend between six and seven thousand miles. From Wiscasset, in the district of Maine, (which is in the state of Massachusetts), to Petersburg, in Virginia, the road lies chiefly on the sea coast, and where it passes inland it crosses

¹ *Stat.*, i, 70, 178, 218, 232, 357. The dates of the acts are: Sept. 22, 1789; Aug. 4, 1790; March 3, 1791; Feb. 20, 1792; May 8, 1794.

² Richardson, i, 107.

³ *Ibid.*, 108; cf. also 66, 68, 83, 128, 132.

navigable rivers connecting the principal commercial towns. From Petersburg to Savannah it is inland.¹

In all there were 51 offices served by this main route.²

In addition to the main post roads, minor or cross posts gave service to 25 other offices. These included four towns in Rhode Island, two in Connecticut along the Sound, seven in Pennsylvania, on the route between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, sundry towns in Maryland, chiefly on the East Shore, and a few in Virginia between Richmond and Norfolk. Albany was the only interior town in New York served by the Post Office.³

It will be noted that certain sections of the country were entirely untouched by the postal service. Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the whole western country had no Post Office. The geographical distribution by sections was: New England 22, Central States 19, Southern States 34; total 75.⁴

The total length of the post roads was 1,875 miles in 1790. Over most of them mails were carried by means of stage-coaches. These had come into general use about 1785.⁵ From that date Congress had directed the extension of this service as fast as possible.⁶ On the main road between Wiscasset and Newburyport, Mass., in the North, and from Georgetown to Charleston, S.C., in the South, riders still carried the mails. On the cross posts this was uniformly the case. The receipts in 1790 were \$37,935, the expenses \$32,140, so that there was a surplus that year of \$5,795. Most of the revenue, however, was derived from letters passing from one seaport to another.⁷ Letters were usually not prepaid, though sometimes this was done.

The early Postmasters General brought to their tasks of developing the service a lively sense of the benefits which might accrue to the country from a wise direction of such development. Osgood in his report of 1790 said that, although it might be possible by energetic management to make the department produce in time a revenue of one hundred thousand dollars per year, for the

¹ Lbk, 1791-1793, 4. ² A. S. P., P. O., 9, 10. ³ *Ibid.*, 11, 12.

⁴ Rossiter, *Century of Population Growth*, 25; also, 9-12.

⁵ Currier, 72. ⁶ *Journ. Cong.*, x, 154, 193; xii, 207.

⁷ A. S. P., P. O., 2.

time being there must be an extension of the service which would use up most of the receipts. In addition to the good effects of the transmission of intelligence, he thought that new post offices and post roads, especially cross-posts, were needed to facilitate the work of the revenue officers.¹ The rates of postage were too high, in his view, especially as they affected the more distant portions of the nation. "The extremes are entitled to a cheap and easy postage from the center of the country, to the place where Congress is sitting," was his judgment. On this basis a postage rate of 33/90 of a dollar on letters from Savannah to New York was prohibitive, and he urged that it be reduced to about 16 cents.²

Pickering, who followed Osgood in the office of Postmaster General, had views like those of his predecessor. In 1793 he wrote,

Our fellow citizens in the remote parts of the Union seem entitled to some indulgence. Their great distances from the seat of government and from principal commercial towns subject them to peculiar difficulties in their correspondence. They have also few or no printing presses among them, hence without the aid of the public post roads they will not only be embarrassed in their correspondence but remain destitute of every necessary information.³

Particularly he urged that all possible means be employed to promote the circulation of "useful information concerning the great interests of the Union."⁴

Western leaders also felt the importance to their section of the speedy extension of postal facilities. Rufus Putnam, Surveyor General at Marietta, wrote to Pickering in 1794 regarding the post which had been established from Wheeling to Limestone, Ky., by way of the Ohio River. After speaking of the frequency of Indian attacks on the mail boats, he said:

I hope nothing I have said or any other circumstances will operate any discouragement sufficient to prevent the sending of a mail by this route, for if it is considered in a political light only, the information by this means obtained as to the measures of the government on the one hand, and the state of the people on the other, by newspapers, by correspondence between friends [*sic*], and other communications to these remote parts of the American Empire may be of infinite consequence to the Government. Nothing can be more fatal to a Republican Government than ignorance among its citizens

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 4-6.

² *Ibid.*

³ Lbk, Book C, 57, 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

and they will be made the easy dupes of designing men, instead of supporting the laws, the reason and policy of which they are ignorant, they will flock in thousands after a demagogue who sets up [to] oppose every measure of government which he is able to persuade them is not for their interest: in such circumstances the well disposed are born down and carried away with the flood. They [are] incapable of opposing for want of information that those within the circle of political information are possessed of. In this point of view I was exceedingly pleased with the sending of mail by this route and hope the expence will not prevent its continuance, altho it should rise considerably beyond what was at first contemplated.¹

The policy in colonial times had been to make a profit out of the postal business. This entailed careful management and the avoidance of those routes which did not pay for themselves. By 1796 this had been given up, in part at least, as is seen in a letter from Postmaster General Habersham to Thatcher, Chairman of the Committee of the House of Representatives on Post Offices and Post Roads.

The unproductive routes in distant parts of the Union [he said] are not noted, as those who are remotely situated appear to have a just claim to that liberal establishment of post roads which has been extended in every direction through this great and flourishing country. It has been a very wise policy to open this useful source of information to the settlers of a new country and the expense will not be considered when the object is so important.²

Though the post to Pittsburgh had been the only mail route to the West in 1790, Congress quickly established others. In 1792 post roads were provided in central New York, as well as in the Lake Champlain and Vermont regions. Western Connecticut, central Pennsylvania, and interior Virginia gained service, while a post was provided from Richmond by way of Staunton in the western part of Virginia, and thence down the mountain valleys through the Cumberland Gap to Danville in the interior of Kentucky.³ By the same act rates of postage were fixed, varying according to distance, from six to twenty-five cents for a single letter.

Beyond Pittsburgh the mail service was extended to Wheeling in 1794; thus it became possible to make use of the great waterway of the Ohio River. A voluminous correspondence, preserved

¹ *Memoirs of Rufus Putnam*, 394.

² Lbk, Book E, 13; Habersham to Thatcher, Feb. 10, 1796.

³ *Annals*, iii, 1334 ff.

in the letter-books of the Postmaster General at Washington, serves to show the pains that were taken to open up this important route to the West. The earliest letter, from Postmaster General Pickering to Isaac Craig at Pittsburgh, dated April 26, 1794, mentioned the establishment of boats with three men each, to carry mail but no passengers. He proposed that the mail should go by the river during nine months of the year and by the Wilderness Road to Kentucky from the middle of December to the middle of March.¹ In a series of letters from Pickering to Craig, and also to General Rufus Putnam, at Marietta, we see the development of this plan.² Some time in June or July, 1794, the route was actually put into operation. A fleet of boats had been built, as Pickering wrote to Putnam, "formed in the best possible manner for ease and expedition in pushing up the stream."³ These were manned by crews of five men each and made the trip in about five days, unless hindered by storms or ice in the river. From Limestone, a new road on the south side of the river allowed the extension of the service to the mouth of the Licking River, opposite the present Cincinnati area. At the time this route was projected, it was planned to give up the older road by way of the Wilderness. But the dangers and uncertainties of river transportation made it advisable to go back to the old road after some years of experience.⁴

The Ohio River boats called at Marietta, Gallipolis, and other settlements as fast as they grew up. Service by them was very slow and various expedients were tried to better it. In 1795 the run of the southern boat was cut off at Preston, Ky., a town on the south side of the river below the mouth of the Kentucky River. The mails were sent from thence by river to Limestone and Fort Washington.⁵

In 1797 a further extension of post roads throughout this country was made by the use of Zane's Trace, then hardly more than a blazed trail, across the southeastern Ohio country. Rufus

¹ Lbk, Book C, 1793-1794, 252, 253.

² *Ibid.*, 277, 287, 288, 316.

³ Pickering to Putnam, *ibid.*, 288.

⁴ Burrall to Barbee, *ibid.*, Book D, 8; Habersham to Putnam, *ibid.*, Book I, 42.

⁵ Pickering to Putnam, *ibid.*, Book A, 81-83; Pickering to Mitchell, *ibid.*, Book D, 70, 71.

Putnam wrote to Habersham regarding this route, that it offered the best line for the mail through this district and beyond to Vincennes and Kaskaskia. Where the road crossed the Hocking River, he said, was the best center for cross posts, being 100 miles from Limestone, 115 from Cincinnati, 110 from Fort Hamilton, and 125 from Greenville. In addition this afforded the best way to St. Mary's Creek and Fort Wayne.¹ Meanwhile the postal service in the Kentucky area was being rapidly developed. May 24, 1794, Pickering wrote to Mitchell, the Postmaster at Limestone, and mentioned routes from Limestone to Bourbon, Lexington, Frankfort, and from Harrodsburg to Danville, from thence by way of Georgetown to Louisville. He desired Mitchell to make provision for a rider through the Wilderness to Danville, and from Danville to Fort Washington. A weekly service was contemplated between these villages and \$2.50 per mile was to be paid to the riders.²

Meanwhile the road was winning out over the river because of the greater regularity of transport by this route. Pickering wrote to Mitchell Jan. 2, 1795, "The great want of regularity and expedition in the conveyance of the mail by the Ohio defeats the object of its establishment, but at the same time is very expensive."³

Later in the same year a letter to Arthur Campbell says:

It gives me pleasure to hear that a new road is lately opened by which a mail can be carried with more safety and expedition from Abingdon through the State of Kentucky to Fort Washington than by the present route. From your representation as well as my own observation I am persuaded that the route on the new road from Abingdon will be shorter, safer and less expensive than that down the Ohio, which are three good reasons for making an alteration.⁴

In 1797 Habersham complained to Jacob Read, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, that the mails by the Ohio River were very irregular. The journey took five or six weeks under the best conditions and in the fall and winter was practically impossible. He strongly urged a return to

¹ Putnam to Habersham, *Putnam's Memoirs*, 416.

² Pickering to Mitchell, Lbk, Book C, 286, 287; Pickering to Barbee, *ibid.*, 318.

³ Pickering to Mitchell, *ibid.*, Book D, 70.

⁴ Habersham to Campbell, *ibid.*, 379. Cf. Same to Same, 487.

the Wilderness route, in order that the Kentucky people might have their mail service regularly.¹

In 1798 it was decided to discontinue the river mail service altogether, and to carry the mails overland between Pittsburgh and Wheeling. Three horses, one kept at Pittsburgh, one at Zane's (Zanesville), and one at Wheeling, were supposed to give a weekly service from Pittsburgh by the way of Cannonsburg, Washington, West Liberty, and Wheeling, to Zane's at the mouth of the Licking Creek on the Muskingum River. Leaving Pittsburgh on Friday at two in the afternoon, the mail would arrive at Zane's the next Monday at eight in the evening. Leaving there on Tuesday at seven in the morning, it would arrive at Pittsburgh on the return trip at 10 o'clock Friday morning.² At this date the schedule time of the mails from Philadelphia, the national capital, to Danville, Ky., was 17 days.³ From Philadelphia to Lexington, Ky., the time was supposed to be 19 days, though it often took much longer, up to 31 days, on account of bad roads and bad connections. This route lay through Staunton, Abingdon, Norfolk, and Danville, to Lexington.⁴ In 1799, the mails to the Ohio country were running to the satisfaction of the postal authorities. Habersham wrote to Edward Tiffin, Postmaster at Chillicothe: "I am glad that the mail is now regularly conveyed on Zane's Road agreeably to my schedule, that the present state of the road will admit of travelling during the summer season with the expedition I have contemplated."⁵

The Kentucky area was further served by a road from Maysville (Limestone), to Lexington, which joined a road from Wheeling.⁶ This passed through Marietta, Belpré, and Gallipolis, to the mouth of the Scioto, and gave added service to the district, rapidly becoming settled, which up to this time had been dependent on Marietta for distribution of its mails.⁷ By 1799 the total length of the post roads in the country was over 16,000 miles, as

¹ Habersham to Read, Lbk, Book F, 145.

² Habersham to McKinley, *ibid.*, Book G, 485-487.

³ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book H, 204, 242, 270, 281.

⁵ Habersham to Tiffin, *ibid.*, Book I, 168, 169.

⁶ Gephart, 49.

⁷ *Memoirs of Rufus Putnam*, 430, 431.

compared with less than 1,700 miles in 1790.¹ In many regions the roads were poor, and in stormy weather this threw the mails off their regular schedule, but in general the service was satisfactory, even in the less settled portions of the nation.² A report made to the House of Representatives in 1796 said that the mail service had considerably increased and was then very satisfactory. What few complaints remained came from the South, where bad roads and freshets in winter and spring upset the service somewhat.³

Tennessee got its first postal service in 1794, when a route was established from Abingdon to Knoxville. From a letter of the Postmaster General to Governor Blount, we find that the Department offered \$2.50 a mile for service once in two weeks and expected an average speed of about 35 miles a day.⁴ George Roulstone, who was appointed Postmaster at Knoxville, was a newspaper printer, and this occasioned uneasiness in some quarters. Pickering wrote to Governor Blount:

It is true divers postmasters are printers of newspapers but there are objections to new appointments of the kind, where other persons suitably qualified and willing to serve can be found. One of the objections has arisen since newspapers sent in the mail have been subject to postage, in which consequently the printer is so directly interested. Another is, when another printer lives in the same place or beyond the first, the latter is under a temptation to interrupt the intelligence destined for the former, in order to create a superiority of value and consequently an increased circulation to his own.⁵

Notwithstanding these objections, however, Roulstone continued to serve and does not seem to have been an objectionable person to the Post Office. He employed a private rider, chiefly to carry his newspaper, the "Gazette." In addition to this, travelers often carried letters, and these, as we are told, were always opened and read everywhere the traveler stopped. Writers of that day, however, tell us that the people were always faithful about forwarding letters which came into their hands, and also were in the habit of forwarding public letters by means of volunteer expresses.⁶

Thus up to 1800 most of the efforts of the Department were

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 17-21.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

³ *Ibid.*, 16, 17.

⁴ Lbk, Book C, 300, 301.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁶ Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 486, 487.

centered on finding the best way over the mountain barrier into the interior country. The chief routes in use were those by way of Wheeling and Zane's Trace into Ohio, and by the Wilderness Road to Knoxville and Nashville, Tenn. The post roads established by Congress in that year (1800) did much toward linking up the service in the western region, both in the old and the newer states. Chief among those routes in the newer regions were those which connected Knoxville and Nashville with Natchez, and those which completed the network connecting up Frankfort, Danville, and Louisville, as well as affording communications with Tennessee by way of Orr's Tavern, with Cincinnati and Vincennes, on the Wabash. From Washington, Ky., a road was established to Manchester and Chillicothe, in Ohio.¹

In western New York also the expansion of mail routes went on steadily. By 1793 the mails had reached Utica, and in the next year proposals were sought by the Department for carrying the mails once a week from Albany to Whitestown, by Schenectady, Johnstown, Canajoharie, and Whitestown; and from Canajoharie through Cherry Valley to Cooperstown; also for a service once in two weeks from Whitestown to Canandaigua.²

Three years later a post route was established from Canandaigua to Niagara, serving also the towns of Avon, LeRoy, Batavia, Lockport, and Tonawanda.³ Service over this route was not rapid, on account of bad roads; for we find that even as late as 1814 the journey from Canandaigua to Buffalo required three and a half days in winter because of very deep snow.⁴

The Government was desirous of extending postal service still further to the West. In 1799 Postmaster General Habersham suggested to a Congressional committee that a route ought to be established from Louisville to Kaskaskia by way of Vincennes, chiefly for the sake of public dispatches. He suggested a service monthly. He also recommended a mail to the Mississippi territory, for the accommodation of Government messages, saying, "Nashville or Knoxville, I suppose, would be the readiest offices

¹ The Post Road Act of 1800 is to be found in *Annals*, x, 1479 ff.

² *Publication of the Buffalo Historical Society*, iv, 309.

³ *Ibid.*, 310. ⁴ Lbk, Book C, 14.

for that purpose.”¹ In accordance with these suggestions a route was established from Louisville to Vincennes once a week and from Vincennes to Cahokia once in two weeks.²

After 1800 mail service in the Northwest was rapidly extended. In 1801 Habersham reported to Congress recommending a route from Pittsburgh to Georgetown, Canfield, and Warren in the Northwest Territory. Georgetown and Canfield were towns in the Seven Ranges, a district then pretty well settled, while Warren was a county town of the Connecticut Western Reserve. The Postmaster General also advocated a direct line from Washington to Marietta or Gallipolis, to increase the speed of mail transportation to this district. Between Vincennes and Kaskaskia, he reported, the country was becoming rapidly settled, and the mails were now carried under a private contract.³ Though extremely desirable, it was not yet believed possible to establish a post route from Pittsburgh to Detroit. The distance was great, the inhabitants few, the route must pass through a wilderness. There was only a footpath with Indian marks, and no accommodations whatever for post riders were to be found on the long trail.⁴ Nevertheless, in 1802 the Department advertised for proposals for carrying the mails from Chillicothe to Detroit.⁵ In 1803 Postmaster General Granger recommended that the line from Cincinnati to Detroit be dropped and that a route from Warren through Cleveland should be substituted. This new route, he pointed out, was shorter and would, besides, serve a more populous territory.⁶ The experiment was first tried of sending the mails from Cleveland to Detroit by water; but this had to be given up on account of the storms which made Lake Erie frequently impassable. In 1805 Granger reported to President Jefferson that he had provided “two faithful, enterprising hardy young woodsmen” to take the mails from Cuyahoga (Cleveland), to Detroit.⁷ He strongly urged the construction of a post road around the southern end of Lake Erie, which would afford sure communication between Cleveland and Detroit. Detroit was

¹ Lbk, Book H, 177, 178.

² *Ibid.*, Book K, 502, 503.

³ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Book L, 368.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Book M, 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Book N, 95, 305.

served also at this time with a weekly post from St. Louis.¹ The main post road from Washington to St. Louis, 975 miles in length, ran through Centerville, Winchester, Westernport, Clarksburg, Marietta, Frankfort, Vincennes, and Kaskaskia. Granger recommended that it should also be arranged so as to include Cincinnati.²

While the postal service was being extended to the West and Northwest, the South was by no means neglected. This part of the country had always lagged behind the other parts in the development of its roads and consequently of its mail service. We find many references in the letters of the Postmaster General to irregular service and delays and interruptions of the mails in the South. Especially important are the letters of Postmaster General Pickering and Habersham to Hoopes and Sumpter, who were important contractors on parts of the main post road south of Petersburg.³ Prior to 1797 the mails had been carried on horseback, but about that time we find that they were regularly carried in stages.⁴ Where the roads were bad, the increasing weight of the mails as the country became more thickly settled was a serious problem for the Post Office to cope with. As early as 1796 the mails to the West and Northwest were so heavy that an extra horse led by the rider had to be provided.⁵ In November, 1796, the Postmaster General wrote: "The western mail at this City [Philadelphia] weighs 120 pounds and is too heavy to be carried on one horse."⁶ Frequently the Department was obliged to send inspectors through the South to better the service.⁷

When it was proposed in 1803 to extend the stage service beyond Petersburg in public conveyances, Postmaster General Granger reported that the Department had not been able to buy in the existing contracts or to make satisfactory terms for the transmission of mails by stages under the law. He had fixed up the line, however, as far as Augusta. He said:

The increase of our population, agricultural and commercial, and the consequent increase of intercourse between our citizens and the travelers to and

¹ Lbk, Book N, 305.

² *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, Book E, 280.

³ *Ibid.*, Book D, 393.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book F, 186.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Book L, 450, 453.

from the different states and the distant parts of the same state; the superior security and regularity with which the mails are carried under cover and guarded by the travelers; the constantly increasing and enormous size of many of the mails on the great roads, owing principally to our extended and extending circulation of newspapers; the vast convenience furnished to the travelers and to the countries through which the public carriages pass; the immense saving effected by them, greatly diminishing the number of horses wanted and the expense of feeding them, as well as the current expense of the travelers, all evidence the propriety of giving every reasonable encouragement to those who will adventure in establishing and supporting regular lines of public carriages.¹

A post office had been established at Memphis in the Mississippi territory in 1800, and in 1801 the Indian agent in the Chickasaw Nation was informed by Postmaster General Habersham that a Deputy Postmaster had been appointed for the Chickasaw country, and that mails would be established between Nashville and Natchez. The schedule called for the rider to leave Nashville Sundays at nine in the morning, and to arrive at McIntosh's Station in the Chickasaw country the next Friday at eight o'clock; to leave there Sunday morning at five and arrive at Natchez the following Saturday at two o'clock in the afternoon; making the distance of 500 miles in about 13 days.² In the same year Habersham sought the aid of the War Department in putting this route into operation.³ On the 4th of March he wrote to Dearborn, the Secretary of War, asking for soldiers to be used on the road to clear up swamps, and so on. He suggested that block-houses be built at Hoolkey's Creek, half-way between Nashville and Natchez, where the riders could keep a spare horse, and also at the ferry over the Tennessee River by the mouth of the Occachoppe Creek. In 1801 the mails were put into fairly regular operation once in two weeks from Nashville to Natchez and from Natchez to Loftus Heights, on the boundary of Spanish territory.⁴ Habersham wrote to an inhabitant of Natchez:

It is the object of the Government to extend the advantages of this useful institution to the most distant portions of the Union and it will be my endeavor to make it answer the great end of the establishment so far as it depends on me.⁵

¹ Lbk, Book M, 320, 321.

² *Ibid.*, Book K, 467, 468.

³ *Ibid.*, 300, 301.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 312-313, 402.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 403.

In 1803 the Nashville-Natchez route was given service once a week.¹

After the acquisition of Louisiana a new problem presented itself. The vast territory thus acquired had to be joined not only to the seat of Government but to the important commercial towns of the East. It was separated from the older portions of the country by a wilderness of trackless forest. Part of the country was inhabited by Indians. Congress quickly set to work to provide communication with the new district. In 1804 post roads were established in the Louisiana country, from Fort Massac to Cape Girardeau, in Louisiana, and thence to New Madrid. Also from Cape Girardeau by St. Genevieve to Kaskaskia, and thence by way of Cahokia to St. Louis. From Natchez by way of the Tombigbee Settlement to New Orleans another road was provided. In 1805 further post roads were authorized in the Mississippi and Louisiana regions, and a new route from Washington to New Orleans by way of Athens, Ga., was proposed.² The first route used between the East and New Orleans was by way of Knoxville, Nashville, and Natchez. In December, 1803, the House of Representatives appointed a committee to try and find some shorter way; and as a result the experiment was tried of sending the mails by way of Tuckaubachee Settlement and the Tombigbee Settlement;³ but this was shortly abandoned as being too dangerous, and the route was changed so as to pass through the Cherokee country, from Knoxville to the Tombigbee region.⁴ To this end treaties were made with the Indian tribes inhabiting this part of the country. In October, 1805, a treaty was made with the Cherokee Nation, by the fourth article of which the Indians granted two roads through their country: the first from Stone's River to the Georgia Road at the southern frontier of the Cherokee Nation; the second from Franklin, on Big Harpath, into Tennessee and Mussels Shoals, then following the nearest and best way to the settlements on the Tombigbee.⁵ By a second treaty negotiated a few days later, the Cherokees granted the free and unmolested use of a mail route from Tellico to the Tombigbee,

¹ Lbk, Book M, 7.

² *A. S. P., P. O.*, 28.

⁵ *Stat.*, vii, 93.

² *Stat.*, ii, 337, 338.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

in return for which the United States was to pay \$1600 and some land concessions.¹ In the same year a treaty was made with the Creek Indians by which they granted a horse-path for the mails from Okmulgee to the Mobile River. They agreed to clear the same and to lay logs over the broad creeks. The Creek chiefs were to keep boats at the rivers and also were to provide places of entertainment for men and horses.²

In 1803 the Postmaster General recommended that the route used be through the back parts of Virginia, North and South Carolina, to Jackson Court House in Georgia, and thence by a road to be purchased from the Indians, direct to New Orleans, with a cross road to Natchez and the Tombigbee Settlement. This he calculated would save 500 miles over the existing route through Tennessee and would greatly accommodate certain portions of South Carolina and Georgia.³

In 1804 a survey was made for the Government by Isaac Briggs, Surveyor General at Natchez. He reported in favor of a line from Fredericksburg, Cartersville, and Danville, Va., to Salisbury, N. C., and Athens, Ga. Thence the route was to pass to New Orleans by way of Point Comfort, the southern projection of the Tallapoosa River and the Mobile River, below the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. The distance by this way he calculated at 979 miles, against 1182 miles by way of Natchez, and 1452 by way of Nashville.⁴ Reports of the Postmaster General dated 1805 and 1806 concerning the post route to New Orleans give us some notion of what the post rider of those days had to encounter. Much of the road is set down as being "wilderness," "not cleared," "obstructed by fallen trees," or as swampy, overflowed land in time of freshets. Many streams are marked as not being invariably fordable, some as needing to have a log thrown across from bank to bank. The purpose of this log was that the mail carrier might himself pass dry with the mail while his horse swam on the lower side of the log. Granger recommended that a path through the woods should be cleared to a width of not more than four feet, for he said it had been found that

¹ *Stat.*, vii, 95.

² *Ibid.*, 96.

³ Lbk, Book M, 332, 333.

⁴ *A. S. P.*, *P. O.*, 37, 38.

to clear to a great width encouraged a heavy growth of underbrush.¹

In 1805 Postmaster General Granger reported to Jefferson that the Spanish Government had agreed to let the United States mails pass through the territory claimed by Spain.² Notwithstanding this assurance, the Post Office authorities felt some uneasiness about the mails through West Florida to New Orleans, and sought eagerly for some other route. Granger wrote to Lieutenant Pratt at Fort Stoddert, bidding him explore a new route to New Orleans. He desired to have the mails moved at a speed of 120 miles a day, and suggested that horses might be stationed 30 miles apart.³ About the same time he wrote to Toulmin at Fort St. Stephen, that the attitude of Spain gave some cause for uneasiness for fear that the mails would not be allowed to pass through West Florida to New Orleans. Toulmin was therefore ordered to lay out a post road, a horse-path from four to six feet wide from Fort Stoddert to Pinckneyville on the Mississippi River, placing trees over the streams where necessary, and to make contracts for the carrying of the mail on this route as soon as possible. A weekly service was desired, with all possible speed.⁴ In July, 1806, Granger again wrote to Toulmin directing him to survey a road from Fort Stoddert to the Passacagoula River, thence to Pearl River, and Lake Pontchartrain, seeking the most direct route, and then to make a minute report upon the topography of the country. Under the same date he wrote to Gaines, postmaster at Fort Stoddert, that the mails by water to New Orleans were safe, though the route through West Florida would not be given up.⁵ At the same time a letter to Benjamin Hawkins, Agent for Indian affairs, directed him to pick out a good site for a road, crooked or straight, from Coweta to Fort Stoddert. The schedule which the Department desired to put into operation called for a run of 17 days from Washington to New Orleans; 7 from Washington to Coweta, and 10 from that point to New Orleans. A letter to Cenas at New Orleans said: "Improvements

¹ Lbk, Book N, 305, 479, 480.

² *Ibid.*, 306.

³ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book O, 18-20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

promise to reduce the time from Washington to New Orleans, to 13 days, 7 hours."¹

Under the repeated urgings of President Jefferson, who naturally was himself deeply interested in the post route to the New Orleans country, Granger succeeded in expediting the service considerably. A new contractor was found to replace the old one between Coweta and Fort Stoddert. Hawkins himself, who seems to have been old and sometimes sickly, was replaced by one Darling, as Agent of the Post Office in the Indian country. Granger wrote to Darling: "In the selection of riders you must always take persons of integrity, sound health, firmness, perseverance and high ambition, pride of character. Among these a preference is due to young men, the less their size the better."² The riders were to be furnished with lights to enable them to travel at night, for darkness was not to be received as an excuse for delay of mails. "The mail is not to stop except five minutes once in ten miles to breathe the horse and twenty minutes for breakfast and supper and thirty minutes for dinner," said an order of the Postmaster General. In 1814 the mail was being conveyed from Nashville via Franklin, Columbia, McIntoshville, Grindstone Fort, Port Gibbon, Trimble's, Greenville, Huntstown, Union, Natchez, Fort Adams, Pinckneyville, Webb, St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, Blandchardville, and Butlers, to New Orleans.³

During the wars with England and with the Creeks, the New Orleans route was interrupted, but upon the restoration of peace it was reëstablished, better than before.⁴ Still there were constant and annoying delays in these mails, and the Government sent out special agents, whose report was quite uniformly that high waters still hindered the mails by way of Pearl River, and also through the Indian country by way of Huntersville, Ala.⁵ In 1819 steamboats were introduced on the Mississippi River, and a proposal was made to carry the mails from Louisville, Ky., to New Orleans,

¹ Lbk, Book O, 55, 56.

² *Ibid.*, 86, 276, 277. See letters of Jefferson to Granger 18th July and 9th August 1806, in Granger Papers.

³ Post Office Department, Route Register, 1814-1817.

⁴ Lbk, Book S, 335; Book T, 181, 182, 190-192.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Book X, 1817-1819; 127.

in six days, and to make the reverse trip in fifteen days. The existing schedule called for a service three times a week, fourteen days each way.¹

By 1822 stage coaches carried the mail from Washington to Nashville in eleven days. They made a speed of five or six miles per hour in the day-time, depending upon the state of the roads, and three and a half miles per hour by night.²

In 1824 it was reported that the road was uniformly bad with the exception of that part of it which passed through the Indian country. Congress had within a few years spent considerable money putting this part of the road into good condition, but as for the rest, the inhabitants were too few to be able to afford to spend money to keep it up.³ At this time the mail was carried from Washington to New Orleans through Abingdon, Knoxville, Columbia, and Natchez, in 24 to 25 days. Another route went by the capitals of the Southern States and thence by way of Montgomery and Mobile, from which point it was carried by steamer for 170 miles to New Orleans. This route was considerably shorter than that by way of Abingdon and Knoxville, and the Department calculated that it could be negotiated in 19 days if the necessary bridges were provided. Though the steamboat service was somewhat upset by high winds, and by shoals in the Pass Au Heron, Postmaster General McLean estimated that a good turnpike road would allow service in 11 days, but would cost the Government \$50,000 a year for three weekly trips, as the other roads could not be given up.⁴ In 1829 Postmaster General Barry reported that the next year would see in operation a service three times a week, by way of Augusta, Ga., Montgomery, and Mobile. The whole trip was to be accomplished in two weeks.⁵

The other important problem in the South concerned the mails in Florida. After 1810 the West Florida district was served from Pinckneyville.⁶ In 1822 routes in Florida were established for the first time. A route from New Orleans to Pensacola was made. Another route provided at this time went from Pensacola to St.

¹ Lbk, Book X, 363.

² *Ibid.*, Book A, 1821-1823, 344.

³ McLean to Moore; Letters to Congress, 1823-1827, 118.

⁴ Lbk, Book T, 1827-1828, 24, 25, 395.

⁵ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 216.

⁶ Lbk, Book Q, 218.

Marks, thence from Vollusia and Dexter on the St. Johns River, thence down the river to Picolatta, and from that point to St. Augustine. There was also a route from Pensacola to Fort Hawkins in Alabama.¹ But, though a route was established by this time between St. Augustine and Pensacola, it could not be put into operation then, because there were no roads between the two places except Indian paths, joining various settlements. A great and impassable wilderness with much swampy land intervened.² We learn from letters of the Postmaster General that in 1825 a line had been established from Hartford, Ga., to Montgomery, Ala.; that a mail to Tallahassee once a month was projected to meet this road at Pindarville, in Dooley County.³ The service over this route was, on the whole, very unsatisfactory. We find from McLean's letters that the contractors were very careless in handling the mail. Portmanteaus were carried unlocked and irresponsible riders were employed. Letters were allowed to accumulate at Pindarville for want of means of transportation. Sometimes it took letters three months, or more, to go from Washington to Florida, because of delays at Pindarville or Pensacola. The War Department, eager to establish communication with the forces of this region, had projected a line of expresses from Pensacola to Tampa Bay.⁴

The beginnings of the postal service in the Northwest have already been mentioned. After 1805 the development was rapid, as settlement expanded into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri. In 1805 Chicago was connected with Fort Wayne, then the nearest post office, by means of soldiers, who went on foot between the two places once a month.⁵ In 1807 mails left Cleveland for Detroit every Friday at 6 A.M., and reached the latter place the next Wednesday afternoon.⁶ In the same year a Cincinnati newspaper gave the following list of mail routes in that state:⁷

1. From Chillicothe by Franklinton to Washington, once in two weeks.

¹ *Stat.*, iii, 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1825, 340, 416.

² Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 98, 99.

⁵ Bogess, *Settlement of Illinois*, 131.

³ *Ibid.*, Book G, 1825, 196, 343.

⁶ Lbk, Book O, 465.

⁷ *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, June 2, 1807. Quoted in Gephart, 54.

2. From Chillicothe by Brown's Cross Roads, Williamsburg, Columbia, to Cincinnati, once a week.

3. Cincinnati to Hamilton, Franklin, Dayton, Stanton, Springfield. From Xenia and Lebanon to Cincinnati again, once a week.

4. From Chillicothe, by Wheeling, Lawrenceburg, and Boone Court House to Frankfort, Ky., once a week.

In 1814 the mails went three times a week from Albany to Buffalo, and once a week to Erie, Youngstown, and Detroit. The service in this region extended somewhat more slowly than elsewhere because of the extreme badness of the roads. The famous "Black Swamp" was long a formidable obstacle to travel. The road from Buffalo to Cleveland and thence to Detroit was said to be one of the worst in the land, being impassable in any kind of bad weather.¹

In 1814 the schedule time for mails from Buffalo to Cleveland, by way of Erie, was 6 days, 21 hours, but it must usually have taken much longer to make the journey.² The mail from Cleveland to Detroit was supposed to go by way of Sandusky and Fort Meigs once a week. In 1823 post offices were established at Chicago, Green Bay, and Michilimackinac. The route to Chicago was by way of Fort Wayne, and that to Michilimackinac was by way of Detroit. Communication between Detroit and Chicago was very slow and unreliable.³

The roads in Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana must have been atrocious. Postmaster General McLean in 1825 used Ohio as an example of bad conditions well met by the contractor. He said that the mails in that state often weighed 1500 pounds, and that the contractor, in order to keep up his schedules, had to refuse to carry passengers. He had put four horses on a cart and transported the mails rapidly in the worst weather. The mud was frequently so deep that the cart sank up to the axles.⁴ Contemporary newspapers give similar testimony. The "Ohio State Journal" of February 9, 1838, said: "Six horses were barely able to draw the

¹ Hulbert, i, 29, x, 146.

² Post Office Department, Route Register, 1814-1817, 6, 14, 20.

³ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book G, 1825, 14.

two-wheeled vehicle 15 miles in three days.”¹ And the Cleveland “Gazette” for August 31, 1837, records that “The land mail between this and Detroit crawls at a snail’s pace.”²

In spite of adverse conditions, the Post Office Department made every effort to extend and perfect its services. St. Louis had a weekly mail from the East after 1816, although the regularity was not all that might be desired. Mail still accumulated at important points. Thus we read in the “Missouri Gazette” for January 31, 1820: “It is reported that Mr. Lindsley, Agent for the Post Office Department, had to-day started four or five bushels of mail to St. Louis by special contract.”³ But improved service was soon provided. In 1825 Ninian Edwards wrote to John McLean: “By the present arrangement mail from the eastward is regularly received at St. Louis twice a week, to wit: every Wednesday by the Shawneetown route and every Sunday by the Vincennes route.”⁴ Into western Missouri and Arkansas, as fast as settlement was extended, the post office pushed its lines. Some of these early routes were “private post routes”; that is, the carrier transported the mail for the postage of the letters, not under contract for a stipulated sum. Arkansas had mails to Little Rock in 1821, and beyond that point in the next five or six years.⁵ By 1826, also, carriers took the mail once a month to the upper Mississippi valley, serving Prairie du Chien, Rock Island, and Hannibal.⁶

From all this region there was much complaint of late mails and irregular service. In bad weather, according to the accounts of travelers, stage wagons or coaches had to be abandoned because of deep snow or mud, and heavy mail-bags were either left with the vehicle or dragged through the mud in canvas-covered crates or on sledges.⁷ With the growth of the country and the increase in the volume of mail, bags became heavier and more bulky. Some-

¹ Hulbert, x, 146.

² *Ibid.*

³ Quoted in Houck, *History of Missouri*, iii, 63.

⁴ Edwards to McLean, Nov. 11, 1825; *McL. P.*, i, fol. 78.

⁵ Lbk, Book Z, 1820-1821, 133; Book B, 1823-1824, 467; Book O, 1827, 155; Book P, 1827, 324.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Book G, 1825, 27; Book J, 1825-1826, 221.

⁷ Cf. Hoffman, *A Winter in the West*, i, 224, 227, 258-259; Hulbert, xii, 103.

times stage drivers hard pressed for time, or driving a heavy load, would "forget" the mail-bags or leave them behind "for want of room in the coach."¹ As a result, even important towns like Cincinnati were sometimes cut off from mail communication with the East for a considerable length of time. Travelers found much fault with the uncertainty and slowness of the service. They pointed out, often inaccurately, that a small added expenditure by the Government would secure the needed improvement of the roads and bridges, which would result in greatly facilitating the transmission of the mail.²

The desire to promote the establishment of post roads was one of the chief ideas underlying the movement for internal improvements, and the power granted to Congress for this end was one of the main bases on which the exponents of such schemes rested their defence of the constitutionality of their proposals. Calhoun said in 1817 that Congress ought to "bind the public together with a perfect system of roads and canals." "Let us conquer space," said he; "it is thus that a citizen of the West will read the news of Boston still moist from the press. The mail and the press are the nerves of the body politic."³ Henry Clay also held this view and was an ardent advocate of internal improvement at Government expense.⁴

In spite of the Constitutional scruples of Madison, Monroe, and Jackson, several important projects were carried through by the Federal Government. Chief of these was of course the Cumberland Road. This furnished a highway over which the mail stages traveled to Wheeling and beyond, across the state of Ohio. All through this period Congress was besieged with petitions from the inhabitants of many sections of the country, mostly from the West, requesting the expenditure of the nation's funds on their roads. Several of these petitions relating to roads in Illinois and Indiana are preserved in the volume on the Post Office in the State Papers series.⁵

¹ Gephart, 94, 104.

² Cuming, *Tour*, 196.

³ Calhoun's *Works*, Cralle's Edition, ii, 190.

⁴ Babcock, *Rise of American Nationality*, 252.

⁵ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 218 ff.

A brief glance at the figures which show the growth of the postal service in the western states and territories, will enable us to round out our survey of the expansion of the service during this period. In 1815 the number of post offices and the length of post roads in each state and territory in the West and Southwest were as follows: ¹

	Post offices	Miles post roads
Indiana Territory	16	609
Illinois Territory	9	388
Kentucky	85	2158
Louisiana	20	1206
Mississippi Territory.....	26	1571
Missouri Territory.....	8	219
Ohio	134	3778
Tennessee	66	2255

By way of comparison, the following figures, though not strictly comparable, are appended. These show the number of offices and the net produce, by states and territories, for the fiscal year 1827-1828: ²

	Offices	Net produce
Indiana	152	\$7905
Illinois Territory	81	3099
Kentucky	224	26792
Louisiana	43	28893
Mississippi Territory.....	62	7461
Missouri Territory.....	76	8551
Ohio	536	36743
Tennessee	221	21945
Alabama	136	18106
Michigan	37	2385
Arkansas Territory	31	1195

By 1836 a great extension had taken place in the post routes. Stage lines served the eastern sea-board from Vermont and New Hampshire to Florida.³ In the interior the routes had spread like a great network, across the Mississippi and as far as the great plains. As early as 1825 the great western route, so called, 4536

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 48.

² *Ibid.*, 198-210. Net produce means gross receipts from postage less postmasters' commissions. No attempt was made to apportion transportation costs among the various states.

³ Hewett, *American Traveler*, 38, 39.

miles long, had been projected by Congress, stretching from Washington by way of the Cumberland Road to Wheeling, thence by Zanesville, Vincennes, St. Louis, and the River Platte to the Yellowstone. From there by Clark River and the Columbia River, it reached the shore of the Pacific Ocean.¹ How much of this route was in operation at this time is hard to determine. At any rate, post roads were established in many parts of Wisconsin, and as far west as Dubuque, Iowa, in 1836.² The expansion of postal service was following close on the heels of settlement.

¹ Hewett, *American Traveler*, 40.

² *Stat.*, v, 90 ff.

CHAPTER VI

THE POST OFFICE AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

1790-1829

ENOUGH has been said already to show the manner in which postal service was extended as the country was opened up. It may not, however, be out of place here to discuss, briefly, several important matters connected with the expansion of the post-office operations. Attention should be called, first, to the principles on which the service was extended, the ideas which were in the minds of those charged with the development of this part of Government activity.

The United States Post Office was, of course, an institution inherited from colonial times, but its operations subsequent to 1789 show some striking differences from its previous history. Until the adoption of the Articles of Confederation the aim had been to secure a small revenue from the office, or at least to make it self-supporting. When the new government was established under the Constitution, the leaders showed more of a desire to extend the postal routes because of the service rendered by the mails in the general development of the country. Much stress was laid on the political advantages of such a course. Washington's opinion, indicated in the statement already quoted from his Message of 1791, is typical.¹ So is the reply of the House of Representatives to the Message of 1792:

The operation of the law establishing the Post Office as it relates to the transmission of newspapers, will merit our particular inquiry and attention. The circulation of political intelligence through these vehicles is justly reckoned among the surest means of preventing the degeneracy of a free government, as well as of recommending every salutary public measure to the confidence and coöperation of all virtuous citizens.²

Many letters of the Postmasters General in the early years of the Government express similar views. "There can be no doubt,"

¹ See *ante*, p. 68.

² Richardson, i, 132.

wrote Habersham to Campbell in November, 1795, "that as the country becomes more settled and new roads are opened they (the mails) can be carried so as to afford a more general accommodation to the citizens and Government, than under present regulation."¹ Writing of unproductive routes the same officer declared in 1796: "It is, however, a pleasing circumstance that some of the most remote post roads already pay their full proportion towards defraying the expenses of transporting the mails throughout the United States."² In spite of his desire to see the widest possible extension of the service, Habersham warned Congress to go slowly and not to take on any more unproductive routes. To Thatcher, Chairman of the House Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, he wrote:

The surplus revenue of this Department will be sufficient at all times to extend the advantages of a post to distant parts of this Union where the aid of public roads will be a public benefit in all its respects of such magnitude as cannot escape the observation of every legislator; but to expend the revenue on unproductive post routes within the limits of the old settlements where such aid, from many favorable causes, is unnecessary, must defeat the extension of new routes as they become necessary, through this extensive country which is being rapidly settled in every direction.³

It was in line with this policy that the service was extended so that Habersham wrote in 1801: "Cross-roads are now established so extensively that there is scarcely a village, court house or public place of any consequence but is accommodated with the mail."⁴

Postmaster General Granger's report of 1810 expressed the same views.

In the nature of our Government, it becomes a matter of the highest importance to furnish the citizens with full and correct information, and independent of political considerations, the interests of society will best be promoted, particularly in the interior, by extending to it the facilities of this office. Nor can the sea-board complain, as it puts a profit on all that the interior produces for exportation, or on all consumed in foreign countries. . . . The steady increase of postage received from the interior furnishes a reasonable ground to believe that, at a period not very distant, the revenue to be from thence derived will equal the expense of their route, except the great connecting lines which are essential to Government.⁵

¹ Lbk, Book E, 379.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, Book F, 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book K, 343.

⁵ A. S. P., P. O., 41, 42.

In the first years of the new government Congress was too busy with other matters to spend much time on the Post Office. Whenever disagreements arose over the interpretation of the powers granted by the Constitution, temporary acts were passed, continuing the old arrangements made under the Articles of Confederation.¹ This was done in 1790 and 1791, so that it was not until 1792 that a serious attempt was made to revise the postal laws and give the establishment a permanent organization. Even then the term of the act was limited to two years, but provisions were made for all matters concerned with the working of the department. With regard to mail transportation, many post roads were named, and in addition it was provided that the Postmaster General might enter into contracts for the carriage of the mails for periods not to exceed eight years.² One further new feature was introduced, important both for the extension of the service and for the principle it contained. For the purpose of extending the postal service the Postmaster General was permitted "to authorize the person or persons contracting to receive during the continuance of such contract according to the rate by this act established all the postage which shall arise on letters, newspapers and packages conveyed by any such post."³ In other words, the contractors on these new routes were to receive, instead of a specified sum yearly, all the postage produced by the mails carried over their routes. These were to be post roads, and marked the beginning of the system of so called "private post roads," which has been so important in the development of our postal service.

In 1794 the new Post Office Act established more post roads, and for the first time made specific provision for stage transportation. Section two provided,

That it shall be lawful for the Postmaster General to provide by contract for the carriage of mail on any road on which a stage wagon or other stage carriage shall be established, on condition that the expense thereof shall not exceed the revenue arising.⁴

Down to 1797 provision for post roads was included in the general Post Office acts; but after that date, as the establishment came to

¹ The debate on the law of 1790 is in *Annals*, i, 1641, 1676, 1677, 1680, 1686.

² *Stat.*, i, 232.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 354.

a more permanent state, special post roads acts, passed at short intervals, took care of this part of the service, while the general organic laws were less frequently altered.

A few provisions of the general act show the disposition of Congress to use every means of transportation at hand. In 1813 the Postmaster General was authorized to contract for mail service by steamboat if the same could be provided regularly throughout the year and not more expensively than service by road.¹ However, this did not entirely solve the problem. For it was found that steamboat captains, like packet-masters and stage drivers before them, were fond of carrying letters outside the mails. In 1823 this was checked by declaring all waters over which steamboats regularly plied to be post roads, thus extending to them the monopoly of the office and effectively stopping this abuse.

Early in the history of the office it became evident that some check must be placed on the multiplication of unprofitable post roads. The first step in this direction was to require a report of these to Congress, for such action as it might see fit to take. But later it was provided that the Postmaster General might discontinue those routes which after two years failed to produce one half the cost of transportation upon them. In 1825 this permissive legislation was changed to a mandatory provision that the Postmaster General should discontinue all post roads which after three years failed to produce one quarter of the expense of transportation of the mails over them. Exception was made in two cases: first, where the road was a necessary part of a through route, and second, where it was necessary in order to reach a county seat.² This last provision was the result of a direction first given in the law of 1814, that the mails should be carried from the nearest post office to the court house of any county in any state or territory.³

The earliest method of mail transportation was, of course, the familiar rider on horseback. In 1790 he had been displaced on a few parts of the main post road, between Boston and Petersburg, Va., but he still held his own on the cross posts. As time went on, the riders disappeared from the more important routes but were always to be found in the newer parts of the country. It was they

¹ *Stat.*, ii, 805.

² *Ibid.*, iv, 95.

³ *Ibid.*, iii, 132, 133.

who carried the mails through the almost trackless forests to New Orleans, and through the swamps of the Northwest. A letter of Postmaster General Pickering gives a good idea of their equipment. In 1794 he wrote to Gotlieb Shober, a prospective contractor in northern North Carolina and the adjacent parts of Virginia:

Convenient saddle bags or portmanteaus will be wanted for the mails on these roads. On account of the size of the packets and rolls I suppose that portmanteaus will be best. How large they should be you can judge from your knowledge of the bulk of the mails of letters and newspapers which come from your own office, making allowance for the probable increase. The links of the chain must be large enough to admit the ring of the portmanteau lock such as is now used for the mail. Staples should be placed so near together that a small hand cannot be thrust in between them. Perhaps a leathern strap may suffice in place of the chain, for if any person would cut the strap to get at the mail with equal ease he would open the portmanteau.¹

Robberies of the mail were not infrequent, especially in the South, in spite of the fact that the penalty provided by law was death. The problem of keeping the mails dry was also troublesome. Not only leather portmanteaus but bags of oiled linen and of deer-skin were tried by the Department in the endeavor to find the best method of preserving the mails.² The form of contract in use in 1826 prescribed that when the mail was carried on horseback, "It shall be covered securely with oil cloth or bearskin against rain or snow, under a penalty of \$20 for each time the mail is wet without such covering."³

In many parts of the South negro slaves were used as riders, and according to all reports they were no less faithful than the whites. There was, nevertheless, a considerable feeling, which was especially to be noted about 1802, that the practice was dangerous. Habersham had not found fault with the practice, but Granger early made it the subject of letters to various members of Congress. In an unofficial letter to Senator Jackson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Post Office establishment, he asked him to take up the matter privately, since it was too delicate for a formal report. There were strong objections to the use of negroes, he said, especially since the more intelligent were used, and these

¹ Lbk, Book C, 297.

² *Ibid.*, Book T, 180.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 149.

might gain knowledge which would make them dangerous to the white people.¹ The suggestion thus made to Jackson seems to have borne fruit, for the Post Office law of 1802 forbade the use of any but a free white person as a mail carrier.

As the mails became too heavy to be carried on a single horse, they were transported either by means of a pack horse, led by the rider, or in a sulky or two-wheeled mail cart. After this came the regular stage coach. The Department favored this form of service as it ensured safer transportation of letters; but there were several drawbacks to be removed. In the first place, stage owners were obliged to make their profits out of the passenger fares, and as Pickering wrote in 1794, "The attention to passengers as the most lucrative part of the business will generally have a preference to the mails."² Even on the route between New York and Philadelphia, stage transportation, while safer than on horseback, was not so regular. The hours fixed by the Post Office Department for the arrival and departure of the mails from important places were often inconvenient for travelers, and the mail stages consequently lost patrons.

Nevertheless this form of service was rapidly extended as the following table will show:³

Years	Weekly transportation of mails on horseback	Weekly transportation of mails in stages	Total weekly transportation of mails
1793	7,762 miles	8,567 miles	16,329 miles
1797	19,708 "	14,902 "	34,610 "
1801	34,380 "	24,490 "	58,870 "
1803	37,228 "	30,172 "	67,400 "
1807	45,000 "	41,528 "	86,528 "

Much difficulty was experienced in getting regular service south of Petersburg, Va. The sparse population of this section promised little profit to the contractors, and it was difficult for the Department to carry out the orders of Congress directing that the mails be carried in stages over the whole of the main post road. This seemed to some a sufficient argument for government ownership and operation of this means of transportation. In May, 1799, a line of government-owned stages was actually put into operation

¹ Lbk, Book L, 257, 258.

² Pickering to Sigourney, *ibid.*, Book C, 319.

³ A. S. P., P. O., 350.

between Philadelphia and Baltimore. Asked to report to the Senate in 1802 as to the result of this experiment, Postmaster General Granger said with his customary frankness that "an exact estimate of the profits cannot be ascertained." He then gave "the balance of receipts and expenditures" for the period, which "constituted a charge against the office" of \$22,470. There was "a balance in favor of the establishment" of \$10,000, since the Government had "saved" \$15,000, which would otherwise have been paid for the transportation of the mails on this route, and had besides come into possession of property in the shape of wagons, horses, and supplies to the value of \$17,500.¹ A more hopeful sign would seem to be the fact that for a year and a half prior to Granger's report the fares of travelers had paid the expenses of the establishment. However, it should be remembered that this was an important and much used portion of the main post road.

The proposal on which Granger's advice was sought in 1802 was for government ownership of stages on the whole route from Portland, Me., to Louisville, Ga., a distance of 1424 miles, as compared with the 103 miles on which the experiment had already been tried. Even the Postmaster General could not bring himself to favor the plan in its entirety, though he felt that, after one year's time, that part of the establishment between Portland and Petersburg could be supported by the fares of passengers. His basis of calculation is instructive. "Where we can count on four passengers one way and three back, daily," he wrote, "daily mails can be run without expense to the Government."² He was sure of the increased security which would attend the mail transportation if stages were run over the whole distance, but the prospects of the southern end of the line were not encouraging. The expense would be about \$98,000, of which \$90,790 was to go for 515 horses at \$132 each and 60 carriages, with harness, at \$377 each. This rather heavy expenditure did not seem justifiable, even though the Government would save the \$38,639 paid annually for carrying the mail over this route.³ Further investigation showed still more clearly the inexpediency of such an undertaking;

¹ Lbk, Book K, 259.

² *A. S. P., P. O.*, 29.

³ Lbk, Book K, 258-263.

for all the attempts of the Government and its agents in 1803 failed to get proper bids for stage service in North Carolina and South Carolina, and Granger told a Senate committee that the country would not support a stage line. He strongly urged the "great public utility" of stage service, suggesting that contracts be given for as long as seven years instead of the customary four, and that as much as fifty per cent increase be made over the rate of compensation given for transportation of the mails on horseback.

The mail stage of this period must have been a brilliant vehicle if we may judge from directions given by the Postmaster General in 1799 in regard to the painting of a mail coach.

The body painted green, colors formed of Prussian blue and yellow ochre; carriage and wheels red lead mixed to approach vermillion as near as may be; octagon panel in the back, black; octagon blinds, green; elbow piece, or rail, front rail and back rail, red as above; on the doors, Roman capitals in patent yellow, "United States Mail Stage," and over those words a spread eagle of a size and color to suit.¹

The mails were carried in locked bags provided by the Department, as the contracts for the service of this period all contained the provision that:

When the said mail goes by a stage wagon it shall invariably be carried within the body of it; and that when it stops at night it shall be put in a secure place and there locked up. A penalty of one dollar a mile shall be incurred for every mile this mail conveyed by stage shall be carried out of the body of it.²

It was on account of such guaranties that Granger wrote to Senator Jackson in 1802:

When transportation in mail coaches is provided, the passengers guard the carrier from attack and the public from the evils of the carrier's dishonesty. The transportation of the mail in stage coaches is considered of such importance as to justify an extra allowance of at least twenty per cent to aid an infant establishment.³

Notwithstanding the penalties provided for failure to keep the mails under cover, there were constant complaints of this sort of thing, especially in the case of newspaper mails. Large bundles of

¹ Lbk, Book H, 391, 392.

² Cf. contract, *A. S. P., P. O.*, 79.

³ Lbk, Book K, 258-263.

papers insufficiently dried and not properly protected by their wrappers were often damaged by being carried under the feet of drivers. From the beginning the Department endeavored to correct this abuse.¹ Even as late as 1835 the newspaper mails were neglected and often left behind. We read that the passengers on one stage made up a purse of fifty dollars to pay the penalty which would be imposed upon the contractor for leaving the newspaper mail behind. A letter from Cincinnati in 1835 says:

The newspaper mail is now conveyed in canvas bags and a portion of these are thrown off at the stage office whenever the conveyance of passengers requires. In a journey to New York and back again last fall I witnessed this in many cases. Since that I have understood why the newspaper mail miscarries when the letters arrive.²

The provocation was doubtless great, for the weight of the mail delayed the stages. James Flint, who described the mail coaches in 1822, was struck by this fact.

The mail coach [he wrote] is a large clumsy vehicle carrying twelve passengers; it is greatly encumbered by large bags which are enormously swollen by the bulk of newspapers. As a substitute for glass windows, a large roll of leather is let down on each side in bad weather.³

There is no way in which an accurate record of the spread of stage service can be made. The early route registers of the Post Office Department are no longer in existence, and the various reports submitted to Congress afford no basis for a complete study. Such information as we have must be indirect, coming from letters of the Postmaster General or the testimony of travelers, and so on. A writer in 1822 says that the mail was carried, "by direct or corresponding stage lines," from St. Marys, Ga., to Highgate, Vt., 1369 miles. We learn further of the great western mail which went by stage from Washington to Franklin, Mo., in 1824.⁴

Until McLean became Postmaster General in 1823, every effort was made to extend this form of service, but McLean saw the difficulties of further development in this direction. Most of the

¹ Cf. Letters to Evans, Hoopes, Hodgson and McCrea; Lbk, Book G, 407, 408, 444, 445.

² Quoted from *History of the Railway Mail Service*, 13.

³ *Letters from America*, 41.

⁴ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 99.

better-settled portions of the nation already had stage transportation. The new districts, which were clamoring for it, did not offer the same favorable field. He therefore set his face against the expansion of stage service. In 1824 he wrote to Duff Green, the politician, who held several important contracts in Missouri, telling him that it was not advisable, on account of the bad roads and sparse population, to send stages up the Mississippi Valley, or west of Vincennes. The mails would travel faster in this district on horseback, he declared, and all contemporary accounts point to the soundness of this opinion.¹ In 1825 he gave further evidence of his opinion in this matter in writing to a westerner:

I will add too the confession of my inability to perceive the propriety or to comprehend the force of your objection to the transportation of the mails on horseback. The great City of New Orleans receives its mail from the other Atlantic markets in the same way. The intelligence of more than half the nation is conveyed on horseback and the correspondence which moved and directed the armies and councils of the Revolution circulated in the same way. The principal use and object of stages is to convey travellers — to facilitate personal as well as epistulary intercourse — and where little or no travelling takes place the Government finds no inducement to provide stages.²

Under McLean's administration the transportation of the mails in stages was extended as far as the resources of the Department would permit. It was expected, indeed, that the expenditure of the office would approximately equal the income and perhaps draw on the "surplus" accumulated in previous years.³

There were many times when the ordinary plodding mails were too slow to meet the needs of commerce or public service. This was overcome by sending special messengers. Newspapers did this, as, for example, several New York and Philadelphia papers, which maintained regular service from Washington which easily beat the mails. Merchants would send out messengers with special market information. This became especially notable with the rise of New Orleans as an important cotton market. The profits from speculation based on this sort of advance information were very large, and the Postmaster General, McLean, sought to end this

¹ Lbk, Book I, 1824-1825, 165.

² *Ibid.*, Book G, 1825, 163.

³ Cf. McLean to Senate Committee of Investigation, 1830; *A. S. P., P. O.*, 324.

condition in 1825 by institution of service which he called the "Express Mail" between the leading commercial centers. The project was for a series of riders, who should carry only a few letters and some slips for newspaper-exchange purposes. Using relays of horses stationed twelve or fifteen miles apart, he hoped for a speed of eight to eleven miles per hour.¹ The regulations worked out for this service directed postmasters not to receive for the express mails any branch letters nor any exceeding half an ounce in weight. Triple postage was charged on matter sent in this mail.²

This new departure was hailed with great rejoicing, especially in New York City. When the time of the mails between that place and New Orleans was cut from sixteen days to seven, the flag on the Merchants Exchange was hoisted in honor of the event. Only a few doubters questioned the wisdom of the new plan. A letter of the time said,

The views of the Postmaster General are in the character of all his measures, enlarged and public-spirited — are they feasible, would or would not there be danger that the expresses would be bearers of imperfect accounts of the state of foreign markets and thus prove messengers of darkness and mischief, instead of heralds of light and promoters of fair trade? ³

These forebodings were too gloomy, for the express mail performed an immense service, especially in the western and southwestern parts of the country. It was formally recognized in the organic law of the Department in 1836. The need of the swift conveyance of public despatches often occasioned the use of expresses. During the War of 1812 regular service under the control of the Post Office Department was maintained between Washington and the armies in the field.⁴

As the transportation of mails by land developed, so also did the service by water. After a brief and unsatisfactory venture with government ownership and operation of packets in the coast-wise service (apparently a survival from the pre-Constitution

¹ Lbk, Book D, 1824-1825, 441-442.

² MS. Draft in Misc. P. O. Papers, Library of Congress.

³ MS. Letter of I. S. Skinner to Richard Douglas of Baltimore, May 25, 1825. In Misc. P. O. Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴ Cf. Lbk, Book R, 486, 489; Book S, 144, 145, 335; Book T, 110.

days), the Department sold its vessel property and settled down to the ordinary method of contracting with packet owners for their services. Rates were the same as on land, so letters were not sent by sea unless especially directed.¹ The coming of steamboats in coastwise and inland water transportation made no problem which could not be easily solved by the application of familiar principles. The Department, after a period of hesitancy, merely declared that the waters where steamers regularly plied should be post roads, which made illegal any carrying of mail over them except under contract with the Postmaster General.

Soon after the establishment of the United States Post Office, the question of foreign mails came to the front. The matter had already been dealt with under the Confederation in connection with the packet services between America and Europe.² The earliest arrangement made under the new Government concerned the mails between the United States and Canada. In 1792 Pickering and Finlay, Postmaster General for Canada, made an agreement for the exchange of mails by way of Burlington, Vt., and Montreal. Each office collected the customary postage on all letters in its own territory, and an annual settlement was made between the postmasters at Burlington and Montreal.³ Pickering expected that the United States Office would benefit by this, especially since many letters were sent to Canada by packet from Boston. He wrote to Fay, the postmaster at Burlington, in 1794, that he had hoped that the postage on these "would nearly have supported the mails in Vermont."⁴ In 1797 a new contract was made, whereby mails were exchanged not only at Burlington but also at Schoodic, Me., and St. Andrews, N. B. A regular through mail service to Upper Canada was also established by way of New York, Canandaigua, and Niagara.⁵ In 1815 the service, which had been interrupted by the war, was resumed as before, except that Swanton, Vt., replaced Burlington as the office from which the transfer of mails was made in that region.⁶ In 1830 mails for

¹ Cf. Lbk, Book H, 390, 391; Book I, 401; Book Q, 197, 198.

² See *ante*, p. 60.

³ Lbk, Book A, 442 ff.; Book D, 131; Book C, 170.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Book F, 365, 366.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Book T, 161, 162; 277, 278.

Upper Canada were exchanged between Lewiston and Queens-town, and between Black Rock and Fort Erie.¹

Postal service to the Continent of Europe was very meager in 1790. All letters had to go by way of England unless ship-captains took the trouble to leave their letter-bags with the postmasters of the ports from which they were sailing.² One interesting episode in the establishment of direct communication with the Continent was concerned with the dealings of the Post Office Department with Andrew von Beseler, who styled himself "Dutch Postmaster at Hamburg." Von Beseler suggested the establishment of an office in Hamburg for the sending and receiving of American letters, and wished to keep accounts with the Post Office Department exactly as any other postmaster general might have done. After a lengthy correspondence covering more than three years, it was discovered that von Beseler was conducting his office for his own private profit; and the United States Post Office Department declined to enter into any formal contract with him, although Pickering expressed his approval of the plan and his willingness to coöperate in putting it in operation.³

The method of assessing postage on foreign mail used under the earlier arrangements was continued after 1789. The regular land rate was charged to or from the port town, plus a certain charge for ship postage. Postmasters were allowed a specific sum on each "ship letter" received, in lieu of the regular commission. The sum of \$442.58 was paid for this service in 1791.⁴ A provision (copied from British practice) that a vessel might not be admitted to the Customs before she had delivered her letters to the post office of the port was continued from colonial times and specifically reenacted in 1792 and subsequent years.⁵ This was strengthened in 1815 by providing that letters must be delivered within three hours of a vessel's arrival in port.⁶ By 1830 the Department put in operation regular services between New York and Liverpool,

¹ Lbk, Book Y, 1830-1832, 2.

² Cf. *ibid.*, Book D, 25.

³ The whole story is revealed in sixty-four pages of copies and translations of correspondence between Postmaster General Pickering and von Beseler, which are to be found in the back of an old volume labeled *Suit Book*, in the Post Office Department at Washington.

⁴ A. S. P., P. O., 14.

⁵ Act of 1792, sec. 12.

⁶ Act of 1815, sec. 4.

Havre, Vera Cruz, Gibraltar, and Lisbon. Most of this was accomplished under the administration of McLean, between 1827 and 1829.¹

There are but few other matters connected with postal service which ought to be discussed at this point. The practice of the early days with regard to "Way Letters" (that is, those put in the mail between offices) had been that the carriers might have the whole postage for themselves. In 1799 it was provided that such letters must be delivered to the postmaster at the first post office to which the rider came. A fee of two cents was paid to the carrier for each letter.² Postmasters were required to include their payments for way letters in their quarterly accounts. In 1810 it was provided that letters might be delivered to persons living between post offices, on payment of a fee of two cents to the rider.³ This appears to be an early forerunner of the rural delivery service.

In the towns letter carriers had been used for some time, perhaps since 1753.⁴ Assistant Postmaster General Burrall wrote in 1793 that, though there was no legal requirement to that effect, the postmasters in most of the large towns employed carriers to deliver letters.⁵ The Act of 1794 authorized this for such places as the Postmaster General might direct. Carriers' fees were two cents, as in the case of letters delivered between post offices.⁶

Some people, however, did not care to have their letters delivered by carrier, but wanted them reserved in special boxes. About 1800 a considerable stir was caused by complaints that reached the Department regarding the partiality shown by postmasters in the provision for "pigeon holes" for certain individuals. Postmaster General Habersham thereupon ordered all postmasters to stop the practice, pointing out that the carrier service was already provided in most of the large towns, and that the new arrangement would deprive the penny-postman of a legitimate source of income. Private boxes were, further, a burden to the post office, and no charge could be made for them under the exist-

¹ Lbk, Book P, 1827, 169, 423, 463; Book T, 1827-1828, 205; Book Y, 1830-1832, 53, 54, 73, 74.

² *Stat.*, i, 733.

³ *Ibid.*, ii, 592.

⁴ This is the date assigned by Hay, *History of the Railway Mail Service*, 8.

⁵ Lbk, Book B, 490, 491.

⁶ *Stat.*, i, 358.

ing law.¹ No further agitation of this matter appears in the Department correspondence for the next twenty-four years, when the subject of private boxes was again broached by Boston and Philadelphia merchants. Postmaster General McLean had been in doubt as to the merits of this scheme. He was sure that if such a service were rendered it ought to be performed free of charge "in order to avoid invidious discrimination." He felt that "if extended still farther so as to embrace individuals, the confusion would be so great as to derange the business of the Department and cause even greater delay to all than the present system."²

Another step toward modern conditions of city delivery was taken in 1825, when McLean sanctioned a private arrangement whereby certain New York merchants had their mail delivered at a designated store instead of getting it from the post office.³ He was also willing to have a letter-box established in a building in Chatham Square, New York City, from which carriers collected mail and took it to the post office. Difficulties in regard to accounts, commissions of postmasters, and so on, together with a doubt as to the legality of the step, prevented his acquiescence in the plan of the New York Chamber of Commerce for a branch post office.⁴

The question of Sunday mails furnished much lively debate at various times. So long as it was merely a matter of moving the mails, no complaints were heard; but after 1810 a regulation of the Postmaster General directed postmasters to keep their offices open on Sunday if mails arrived on that day. A clause in the post office law of 1810 directed postmasters to attend at their offices, "every day" at such hours as the Postmaster General might direct. Granger was not in sympathy with the plan, feeling that it tended "to bring into disrepute the institution of that Holy Day."⁵ Nevertheless, according to law, he directed that offices be kept open one hour after the arrival of a mail, or one hour after the usual time for church services.⁶ Even this arrangement did

¹ Lbk, Book K, 125, 147.

² *Ibid.*, Book A, 1823-1825, 405.

³ *Ibid.*, Book I, 1825-1827, 33.

⁴ Cf. Letter to Varnum of the House of Representatives Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, *ibid.*, Book Q, 298.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 297 ff.

not meet with entire favor, and many petitions were sent to Congress to repeal the law or put a stop to the obnoxious practice. In 1815 both the Senate and the House of Representatives thought it well to take some action on these protests. Their committees got information as to the delays involved if the transportation of the mails on Sundays should be stopped. Then they solemnly reported that in time of war it was inexpedient to alter the existing arrangements of the Post Office Department.¹ No change was made in the laws, and the protests died away, only to recur again toward the end of McLean's administration. The latter pointed out the delays involved, the undesirable alternative in the way of private messenger service, and the hardships to travelers if the mail stages should not run on Sunday.² The Senate Committee on this occasion merely mouthed McLean's words, but the House Committee advocated a change in the law so that no postmaster should be compelled to deliver mail on the Sabbath.³ No new legislation, however, resulted from this discussion.

A summary of the development of the Post Office Department as a public service might well conclude with an estimate of the growth of the service under various Postmasters General. It is, however, practically impossible to find a proper criterion for this purpose. The records of the Department were not kept in such a manner as to allow of the reconstruction of a complete picture of its activities. The task is made more difficult by the peculiar nature of the Post Office. As an instrument of service, a device for aiding in the development of the nation through the increase of communication, it presents one aspect. If viewed as a public business undertaking, a part of the revenue system, its record should be read very differently. It will be here considered from the point of view of service, leaving the consideration of its financial operations to a later part of this study.

It should be borne in mind that the materials from which this analysis must be made are scanty and of poor quality. The most useful figures are those given officially from time to time concerning the number of post offices and the length of the post roads. Of

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 46, 47.

² *Lbk*, Book B, 1828-1829; 205, 206, 250.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 211, 212, 213.

more doubtful value, yet probably somewhere near the truth, are those given by Pliny Miles, a former postal official, in his book on "Postal Reform."¹ These include an estimate of the number of letters transmitted through the mails in each year. They have been used, though it does not appear just how they were made, and this fact reduces their importance.

An examination of the whole period from 1790 to 1829 reveals evidences of tremendous growth, but it must be remembered that the beginnings were very small. In forty years the number of post offices increased 106-fold, from 75 to 8050, or 10,633 per cent. This huge increase was the result of rapid and steady growth.² In the first five years the number of offices more than doubled, and it continued to do so until 1805, when the rate of increase dropped somewhat. Even after the latter date there was no five-year period before 1830 when the rate of increase was less than 38 per cent of the total number of offices in the preceding period. This fact bears striking testimony to the efforts of the Department to extend mail service as rapidly as possible to all portions of the country.

With regard to post roads a similar development took place, though on a smaller scale. From 1790 to 1829 successive acts of Congress increased the length of the post roads from 1,875 miles to 114,780 miles, a growth of some sixty-fold, or 6,021 per cent.³ Here, as in the case of the post offices, the development was most rapid in the earlier years. The average length of roads in the first five years of the office was 5001, nearly three times as great as the total in 1790. Increases of 97 and 64 per cent in the next two five-year periods gave a wide extension to the service. Then began a period of greater caution in the establishment of new routes, which lasted for about ten years. Many causes, of course, contributed to this result, but it is clear that the influence of Postmaster General Granger was thrown on the side of cautious expansion. In this regard his administration, from 1801 to 1814, presents a striking contrast to that of his successor, Meigs. After 1815, however, expansion on a reckless scale was resumed and was checked

¹ Cf. *Postal Reform*, 26, 27.

² See Table II, Appendix C.

³ See Tables I and II, Appendix C.

only by recurring deficits in the operations of the Department between 1820 and 1825, which were due in no small part to extravagance in this particular.

The difficulties of the Post Office in the early eighteen-twenties emphasize the hardships imposed on the management by the system of divided control, whereby Congress authorizes extensions of the post roads and leaves the Postmaster General to pay for them as best he may. A road in an unsettled part of the country was obviously a two-fold embarrassment, since, on the one hand, it was sure to produce little revenue, and on the other, it was usually necessary to pay a high price for transportation of the mails in such regions. Inasmuch as the establishment of post roads was one of the favorite species of Congressional "pork" of the period, the difficulties of the Postmaster General can be easily appreciated.

Some idea of the volume of business done can be gained from the figures given by Miles with regard to the number of letters handled by the Office at various times. These figures represent at best an estimate only, and are based in part, at least, on the receipts for postage. They indicate a growth in forty years not quite so rapid as that shown by the increase of post offices or the extension of post roads. The number of letters increased about fifty-fold, rising from 265,545 to 13,659,344. The course of this growth was the same as in the other matters already examined. Increases of 177 and 56 per cent were followed by smaller figures in the later years. The five-year period 1820-1824 was particularly disastrous to the revenue of the Department, when a drop in the rate of increase of letters coincided with a great expansion of post roads. The number of letters increased but 8 per cent and the receipts from postage but 3 per cent, while the length of roads was increased 47 per cent and expenses for mail transportation 28 per cent. According to the estimates the average rate of increase in letters carried was 71 per cent in each five-year period.

A detailed discussion of the financial operations of the Post Office will be given at a later point in this study,¹ but one or two comments here will serve to complete our view of the Department

¹ See Chapter IX.

as a public service. A consideration of the relation between expenditure and revenue will reveal a consistent policy to extend the service rather than to secure a surplus from the Office. Save only in the stress of war-times, there was no attempt to raise revenue, nevertheless the policy of the Department was somewhat influenced by the condition of the Treasury. After 1820 there was more money, and a marked tendency to spend more liberally. The following table shows the record of each Postmaster General down to 1829, giving the percentage of operating expenses to postal receipts, or revenue from operation. Among operating expenses are included commissions to postmasters, payments for mail transportation, and incidental expenses of operation, such as cost of mail-bags, locks, wrapping paper, etc. Salaries and office expenses of the Department are not included, since these were paid from separate funds provided by Congressional appropriation. To these is added also a statement of the average payment for mail transportation per mile of authorized post road during the term of each officer:¹

P. M. G.	Dates	Percentage of revenue ex- pended	Mail transpor- tation per mile of road
Osgood	1789-1791	81.7	\$12
Pickering	1791-1795	71.9	5
Habersham	1795-1801	74.0	6
Granger	1801-1814	81.3	6
Meigs	1814-1823	94.6	13
McLean	1823-1829	98.2	7

These figures reveal the close economy practised by the first three Postmasters General, and especially by Pickering and Habersham. Granger, at first sight, appears to have been more extravagant, but it was in his term of office that the Louisiana Territory was acquired and that the great westward expansion of the Office occurred. Measured in terms of cost per mile of post road, his showing is remarkable indeed. With regard to Meigs

¹ These tables are constructed from materials found in various official publications. The computation of percentage of revenue expended is based on Postmaster General Barry's report to a committee of investigation in 1830. Cf. *A. S. P., P. O.*, 243.

The figures relate to the terms of the various officers, not to fiscal years. They should, therefore, be compared with those given in Appendix C.

and McLean two comments should be made: first, that the weight of the mails was constantly increasing, and second, that, by the time Meigs took office, it was pretty clearly established by custom that no revenue was expected from the Office. The really serious criticism against Meigs is to be directed not at the fact that he spent 94 per cent of his postal revenue, nor even that deficits frequently appeared during his administration, but at his evidently extravagant payments for mail transportation. From all returns it appears that he extended stage service much more widely than the resources of the Department would warrant. Nor can this be laid to the charge of Congress, since the law gave the Postmaster General power to determine the character and frequency of the service to be supplied on each route. There was always, of course, pressure brought to bear by the inhabitants of different sections of the country for improvement in the postal facilities granted them; but all records, statistical and other, show that Meigs yielded to this more than either Granger or McLean.

McLean's record is to be explained on different grounds, for he, more nearly than any other Postmaster General, put back the entire receipts into the service. He deliberately followed this policy, for he told a Senate Committee, after his retirement from office:

I say now, as I have always said when speaking on the subject, that I do not consider an efficient administration of the Department is shown by the annual balance in its favor. Its funds should be actively employed in extending the operation of the mail. They should not be permitted to accumulate in the hands of postmasters and in banks. Revenue is increased in a compound ratio by every judicious extension of the mail.¹

A similar view found expression in the statement made in 1825 by Richard Rush, Secretary of the Treasury, that the receipts from the Post Office had been "exhausted in defraying the expenses of that extensive and useful establishment," and thus performing "the highest purposes of revenue by contributing to the intercourse, the trade and the prosperity of the country."² And, on the whole, approval must be given to such views of this important public service.

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 324.

² *Repts. Sec'y of Treas.*, 1815-1829, 312.

CHAPTER VII

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

IN 1789 the status of the Post Office was not clearly established. The institution which the exigencies of the Revolutionary War threw into the control of the Continental Congress was continued in the hands of its successor under the Articles of Confederation.¹ In the Constitutional Convention of 1787 there was no objection to giving the general government power to "establish post offices and post roads."² Attempts were made at that time to include also the power to regulate stages upon the post roads, but this proposal was not adopted by the committee to which it was referred.³ Among the various state conventions which ratified the Constitution, only one, that of New York, recorded any objection to the powers granted to Congress in this matter. In that state a resolution was adopted looking to the limitations of the grant, to the effect that "the power of Congress to establish post offices and post roads is not to be construed to extend to laying out, making, altering or repairing highways in any state without the consent of the legislature of such state."⁴ The only reference made in the "Federalist" to the postal system was the brief remark, in the 42d number: "The power of establishing post roads must, in every view, be a harmless power, and may, perhaps, by judicious management become productive of great public expediency. Nothing which tends to facilitate the intercourse between the states can be deemed unworthy of the public care." It seems rather strange, in these later days, to see the small importance attached to the institution which has since developed into a powerful department of government, and which exerts a tremendous

¹ Power to regulate the Office was given to Congress by the ninth Article of the Articles of Confederation. Acts were passed in 1782 and following years.

² Article I, sec. 8.

³ *Elliot's Debates*, v, 440, 441.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 406.

influence in many parts of the lives of the people.¹ It should be remembered, however, that the terms are very general in character and that the Office had never been of great importance.

Although the power of the Federal Government over the Post Office was recognized, yet the machinery for this control had not been worked out by the time the Constitution was put in operation. Congress therefore proceeded to pass a bill, in September, 1789, which provided for the temporary continuance of the Office as it then existed. In this it was provided that the Postmaster General should perform the same duties and receive the same salary as under the "Laws of the previous Congress." There was no thought of creating any new department of government or of assigning jurisdiction over the Office to any of those then existing. The law merely said: "The Postmaster General shall be subject to the direction of the President of the United States in performing the duties of his office and in forming contracts for the transportation of the mail."²

The term "General Post Office" was generally used to denote the establishment, both in the discussions in Congress and in the laws.³ Indeed, as Mr. H. B. Learned has clearly shown, in his work on the Cabinet, the phrase "Post Office Department" does not appear, except incidentally, in the organic law of the Office until 1825. It was not called an "Executive Department" until 1873.⁴ A careful examination of the letter-books of the Postmasters General shows that the heading "General Post Office" was in use December, 1821, when it was replaced by "General Post Office Department." After September 1, 1823, letters were headed "Post Office Department."⁵ The last date falls near the beginning of the service of McLean, and serves to show that offi-

¹ On this point, as well as on all points connected with the subject of the powers of the Post Office, see the excellent monograph by Professor Lindsay Rogers, entitled, *The Postal Power of Congress*. The thorough treatment given by this work on many matters, such as the use of the postal power to further improvements at government expense, etc., has been valuable to the present writer, while it has made it unnecessary to discuss these things at length in the present study.

² *Annals*, i, 80, 894; *Stat.*, i, 70.

³ Cf. Act of 1792, sec. 3.

⁴ Learned, 231; *Stat.*, iv, 102.

⁵ Lbk, Book A, 1821-1822, 1; 1823-1824, 2, 3.

cer's opinion of the post he held, and also throws some light on the question of the entrance of the Postmaster General into the Cabinet.

The Act of 1789 did nothing in fixing the status of the Post Office beyond putting it definitely in the hands of the executive branch of the Government. According to British practice it belonged to the Treasury as a branch of revenue, but some leading men wished to see it otherwise administered in this country. Of these Jefferson was the most prominent, and we are fortunate in having his own statement of his views in the matter. Under date of February 28, 1792, he wrote down a plan for improving the speed of the mails. The next day's entry tells of a conversation with President Washington on the subject, of which Jefferson wrote:

I had hitherto never spoken to him on the subject of the post office not knowing whether it was considered as a revenue law, or a law for the general accommodation of the citizens: . . . the law just passed seemed to have removed all doubt by declaring that the whole profits of the office should be applied to extending the posts, and that even the past profits should be refunded by the treasury for the same purpose: that I therefore conceive it was now in the department of the Secretary of State: . . . I thought it would be advantageous to so declare it for another reason, to wit: that the department of the Treasury possessed already such an influence as to swallow up the whole executive powers, and that future presidents (not supported by the weight of character which he possessed) would not be able to make head against this department.¹

In spite of these arguments Washington had other ideas, and he was not willing to be turned from these by the insinuation which jealousy of Hamilton caused Jefferson to urge upon him. In October, 1792, he wrote to the Secretary of State:

The Post Office (as a branch of the revenue) was annexed to the Treasury in the time of Mr. Osgood and when Col. Pickering was appointed thereto he was informed, as appears by my letter to him dated the 29 day of August 1791, that he was to consider it in that light.²

Thus it came about that the "General Post Office" was placed under the general supervision of the Treasury Department, a condition which is recalled by the fact that Osgood's report of 1790

¹ *Writings of Jefferson*, i, 286, 287.

² Quoted by Gaillard Hunt in *American Journal of International Law*, iii, 146.

was addressed to Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury. The connection was strengthened in 1792 by the requirement of quarterly accounts from the Postmaster General. Hamilton's report on the finances in 1790 dealt briefly with the Office as a source of revenue.¹

Washington's first annual message urged action on the part of Congress to put the post on a permanent and sufficient footing.² But there were still several questions which had to be threshed out in the House and Senate before this could be accomplished. For example, the House in 1790 spent much time over the question, who should establish post roads. It was understood that the power granted by the Constitution covered merely the designation of the routes over which the mails were to be carried, but the problem remained as to what authority should make the choice. It was at first proposed to leave this to the Postmaster General, but this was attacked as being inexpedient. "It cannot be supposed," said one speaker, "that the Postmaster General knows what routes are eligible better than many of the members."³ In addition, it was contended that such a provision would be contrary to the Constitution. In the Senate the proposal to leave the naming of the post roads to the Postmaster General met with more favor than in the lower house. It was held that this arrangement had worked well under the Confederation and might be expected to produce the best results under the new Government. Furthermore, the fact was brought out that many of the roads would not produce sufficient revenue to meet the charges of transporting the mail over them. It was urged that the head of the Department could manage this better than Congress.⁴ But the question of constitutionality was again raised, and the two houses could not agree. The office therefore was continued by temporary acts in that year (1790) and succeeding years, until 1794.⁵

The important question of admitting newspapers to the mails was raised during these debates. In the earliest colonial times, and indeed down to the coming of Benjamin Franklin into the

¹ Cf. Repts. Sec'y of Treas., 1790-1814, xxvii, 170.

² Richardson, i, 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1676, 1677.

³ *Annals*, i, 1641.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1712, 1713, 1344 ff.; iv, 1431.

Office, no provision had been made for carrying papers, nor had any rates been established for them. It was customary for the postmasters in the larger towns to be the publishers of newspapers and to circulate these by means of the regular post riders. Rival printers could get their sheets distributed only by bribing the postmen, but Franklin, who had himself suffered under this condition, remedied it in 1758 by providing rates for the carriage of newspapers, allowing all to be circulated by means of the Post Office. This plan was followed under the Confederation, being incorporated in the Ordinance of 1782.¹ Nevertheless, when it was proposed in 1790 to admit newspapers to the mails "under rules to be made by the Postmaster General," certain men, like Gerry and Burke, protested loudly against this "attempt to build up a Court Press and a Court Gazette."² But these fears were not shared by other public men of the time, most of whom looked with great favor upon the increasing circulation of newspapers which was made possible by the Post Office.

The Office of 1792 was essentially a simple institution. The law of that year, the first comprehensive statute to be enacted after the adoption of the Constitution, embraced in its thirty brief sections the entire business of the Department. It designated post roads, fixed rates of postage, provided punishment for depredations upon the mails and directed the conduct of the Deputy Postmasters.³ The Postmaster General was given power to appoint his deputies and also to make contracts for the conveying of the mails over the routes designated by Congress. In addition to the regular post roads, he could establish others by allowing the carriers to take the whole of the postage as their return instead of a specified annual payment. The system of accounting was simple indeed. The postmasters were to render quarterly accounts to the Postmaster General, who must in turn account quarterly to the Secretary of the Treasury. In order to ensure competition, all contracts for mail transportation had to be advertised for a stated period. As with other public contracts, copies must be filed with the Comptroller of the Treasury. It will be noticed that the Postmaster General was not required to turn over to the Treasury all

¹ *J. C. C.*, old ed., vii, 503 ff.

² *Annals*, i, 1680.

³ *Stat.*, i, 232.

moneys received from postage, but merely the surplus which remained after paying the current expenses of the Office. Beyond the expense of the existing contracts, he was directed to use the surplus of one year to meet the expenditures of the next. This provision, as we have already seen, was not followed to the letter, for in the early years less than 80 per cent of the revenue was expended year by year.

Prior to 1799 the Post Office apparently paid all its expenses, including salaries and administrative expenses generally, out of its postal revenue, but after that year Congress appropriated money from the general funds in the Treasury for the payment of the Postmaster General, Assistant and Clerk, and for the incidental expenses of the "General Post Office at Philadelphia." The earliest appropriation made in 1799 included a salary list of \$8950, with \$2000 for contingent expenses.¹ There was a clear line drawn between the expenses which were met with moneys appropriated by Congress and those which were paid out of the revenue from postage. The sections in the Appropriation Act of 1802 which related to the Post Office set this out clearly. The money then provided for contingent expenses was

for expense of fuel, candles, stationery, furniture, chests, etc. exclusive of suits, prosecutions, mail locks, keys, portmanteaus, saddle-bags, blanks for post offices, advertisements relative to the mail and other expenses of the Department at large, these being paid for by the Postmaster General out of the funds of the Office.²

The Post Office paid all its expenses in connection with mail transportation, but had its office expenses paid like any other Government department. The entire staff of the Department in 1790 consisted of a Postmaster General who was paid \$1500, an Assistant Postmaster General, paid \$1000, and one Clerk at \$500. They looked after the 75 offices and 18 contracts for carrying the mails which constituted the sum total of the activities of the

¹ *Stat.*, i, 270.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 186. The distinction thus made between those expenditures paid out of appropriations and those met from the postal receipts is important from the point of view of Post-Office accounting. The published statements never included the administrative expenses, only the operating expenses being reported. This led to misrepresentation of the real financial condition of the Office. For further discussion of this point, cf. Chapter IX.

Office.¹ As the service grew the number of clerks increased, as is shown by the following table:²

Year	Post offices	Miles post road	Clerks	Clerk hire provided by law
1790	75	1,875	0	0
1795	463	13,207	4	\$2,000
1800	903	20,817	7	4,250
1805	1558	31,076	9	9,160
1810	2300	36,406	12	12,330
1815	3000	43,748	16	16,580
1820	4500	72,492	21	22,700
1825	5677	94,052	27	28,300
1829	8004	115,000	38	39,700

As early as 1795 Habersham complained of the inadequacy of his force, the business of the Office having increased seven-fold while only three clerks had been added to the staff.³ Congress replied by enacting that the Postmaster General might have as many clerks as he deemed proper, but fixed \$4250 as the limit of their combined salaries.⁴ In the same year the Postmaster General's salary was raised to \$3000 and that of the Assistant to \$1700. In 1810 a second Assistant Postmaster General was provided, at a salary of \$1600. In 1818 the Postmaster General was given \$4000, and in 1827, \$6000, bringing the salary to a level of those paid to the heads of the other Government departments.⁵

The apportionment of duties in the Post Office Department was most haphazard. In 1798 the share of the Postmaster General was "to superintend the business generally," and specifically to attend to the principal arrangements for mail transportation, appoint postmasters, and "attend to the exterior correspondence of the Office." The assistant attended to all matters regarding money, including remittances from postmasters, paying contractors, and rendering the required accounts to the Treasury Department. According to the custom of those days, this officer deposited all money to his own order in the various banks and drew on them to pay the bills of the Department. This was unbusinesslike from a modern point of view, but it was quite the ordinary

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 14.

² Report of Barry to Wickliffe, March, 1830, in *ibid.*, 253.

³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴ *Stat.*, i, 731.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iv, 239.

thing, and there seems to have been no great loss involved through the dishonesty of any of the Assistant Postmasters General. In addition, there was a solicitor who had charge of contracts and all legal matters, such as the commencement of suits against delinquent postmasters. A bookkeeper and four clerks completed the force. One of these latter was in charge of the department of dead letters.¹ When a Second Assistant Postmaster General was provided, he took charge of delinquent postmasters' accounts and also of preparing the required reports to the Treasury. Until McLean took charge of the Office there was no system whatever to be found. As Postmaster General Barry said in 1830, "The distribution of duties among the officers and clerks has ever been founded on the adaptation of the individual to the service to be executed." As an instance, he cited the case of Phineas Bradley, who, having had experience as a subordinate clerk in making out mail contracts, was continued in charge of this work after he had been promoted to be chief clerk and, later, Second or Junior Assistant Postmaster General.²

McLean, with characteristic vigor, proposed the new plan, which is here given from a manuscript draft:

To give greater despatch and system to the business of the Post Office Department the following arrangement is made: 1. Appointment of Postmasters; to this division is assigned everything that relates to the appointment of postmasters, their removal and the establishment and discontinuance of post offices — forwarding blanks, mail bags and locks. 2. Contracts; to this division is assigned the contracts for carrying the mails — all charges in the travel of the mails, complaints against contractors and penalties incurred by them. 3. Pay; to this division is assigned all disbursements made by the Department, and the reception of all money remitted to the Department. 4. Accounts; to this division is committed the reception of quarterly returns and the examination of postmasters' accounts. 5. Collection; to this division is assigned the superintendence of all suits brought by the Department. 6. Reports; to this division is assigned the reports made to the Treasury, of every description. 7. Dead Letters; to this division is committed the opening of dead letters and the correspondence which may grow out of them.³

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 18.

² Barry to Calhoun, May, 1830, *ibid.*, 253.

³ Misc. P. O. Papers, MS., Library of Congress.

This plan is similar to that which was in operation in 1830. There were then "three general and distinct branches, viz.: that on finance; appointment of postmasters and their duties; and of mail contracts and the superintendence of the transportation of the mail." The division of finance was under the Second Assistant Postmaster General, and included the solicitor's office, the pay office, the examiner's office, and that of the registrar. The division of appointments was under the First Assistant and included the offices of appointment, dead letters, and instructions, the last having charge of special correspondence in regard to legal matters and depredations upon the mails. The office of mail contracts was under the chief clerk, but both McLean and Barry advocated the provision of a Third Assistant Postmaster General to take charge of this branch of the service.¹

Though the force increased as time went on, little improvement was made in the business methods of the Office. It is true that the Department was organized in a day when methods in private business were so loose and haphazard as to seem ruinous to us in these days; but there is no reason to believe that the service was abreast of the best business firms of its day. A great number of matters might be mentioned in which the procedure was faulty. All letters were indeed filed, and outgoing letters copied, but these materials were not indexed except by names of addresses. Some of the earliest letter-books of the Postmaster General have the old vowel index, in which names are entered according to the first vowel, regardless of the initial consonant. Postmaster General Barry stated in 1830 that there had never been any route book or any record of mail contracts, and that the First Assistant Postmaster General had been in the habit of relying on his memory for all such matters.² This, however, must be set down as a partisan statement, for Barry was anxious to discredit his predecessor, McLean, and indirectly the administration of President Adams. There are now in existence several "Route Registers" of dates around 1817, and the tradition in the Department is that all the missing records were destroyed in a fire in 1836. The greatest loss at that time was in the files of the office of appointments, which

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 222, 223. ² *Ibid.*, 253.

had been created under McLean. As the clerks in this department are said to have been employed "in the perusal of letters, memorials, and endorsing on them their titles and summaries; collecting and filing them in their appropriate places with the requisite information in each case; drawing up abstracts of cases for the Postmaster General," it is evident that some material of great interest to the student, not only of the Post Office but of the civil service in general, has been lost.

One reason for the poverty of records and the careless manner in which they were kept is to be found in the fact that only the simplest reports were required by law. In the beginning a quarterly account had to be filed with the Treasury, and by later laws certain information was regularly reported to Congress. Unproductive post routes, lists of mail contracts, and after 1825 reports of postage accrued at each office in the nation, were duly communicated, but there was nothing like a regular report to the President of the general condition of the Office until 1823. Then Monroe requested from McLean a report on the state of the Office, and the Postmaster General handed in the first of the regular annual reports, with the words, "In obedience to your request I have the honor to submit the following conditions respecting the affairs of the Department."¹ He included figures showing the size of the establishment, the number of offices, and the miles of post roads; touched briefly upon the financial conditions in the preceding years, and concluded with an assurance of rigid economy in the future management. On the basis of this report Monroe was able to comment on the Department in his message to Congress.²

John Quincy Adams thoroughly approved the practice, and after his election to the presidency continued to receive reports from McLean, whom he had retained in office. On November 17, 1825, Adams wrote in his diary: "I desired him to make me a report upon the concerns of the Department which has been usual yearly since he came into the Post Office. It had not heretofore been customary but the practice was introduced within these few years by Mr. Monroe and appears to be much approved."³ Thus

¹ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 95. The date is Nov. 19, 1823.

² 18th Cong., 1st Sess., House Exec. Doc. 2.

³ Adams, *Memoirs*, vii, 54.

began a custom which has survived to the present day. The earliest reports were short, giving only receipts and expenditures and sometimes brief comments; but after 1830, when the Post Office Department was under fire from the critics of the Jackson administration, they had a more partisan and argumentative character.

Entirely aside from their contents, however, these annual reports have a significance for the historian of the Post Office. As we have seen already, the establishment was at first considered subordinate to the Treasury, and the Postmaster General was in no sense an officer comparable to the secretaries of the various Government departments; but as the institution developed and grew in importance as a public service, it became necessary to recognize this fact and include the head of the Office among the President's advisers. The facts cited by Mr. Learned in his work on the Cabinet would indicate that this came about largely because of the desire of the chief magistrates, and especially Jackson, to control the appointment of deputy postmasters. It had often been necessary for the Cabinet to discuss the appointment of postmasters to the important offices like New York, and many times the Postmaster General must have been consulted on these matters, since the appointing power was by law vested in his hands alone. The only instance which Mr. Learned found of a Postmaster General being included in a Cabinet conference prior to Jackson's time was in 1816, when Meigs was invited to a meeting at which the appointment of the postmaster at Albany (one of the most important cases of that time) was discussed.¹

The position and duties of the deputy postmasters in 1790 represented the result of growth through the colonial days. The duties were simple and, even in the larger offices, at that period did not require a man's whole time. The remuneration was therefore small, for, as Assistant Postmaster General Burrall wrote in 1795, "It is not supposed that the pecuniary profit will be a motive for persons to conduct this business in small towns."² Even as late as 1825 McLean wrote the holder of a small office that the Department did not intend to pay enough so that a man

¹ Learned, 243, citing Adams, *Memoirs*, v, 480.

² Lbk, Asst. P. M. G., Book A, 86.

could give his full time to the office. He was expected to engage in some other business.¹

Frequent editions of the official regulations made by the Postmaster General show the development of the duties of the deputy postmasters. From the regulations of 1798, the earliest set preserved in the Department at Washington, we draw an account of the business as then transacted. All postmasters, deputies, or clerks were required to take oath of faithful performance of their duties. When a mail arrived a postmaster was supposed to unlock the bags with a key that he had and take out the letters addressed to his office. Mail for the various post offices was made up in packages directed to each individual office, each package being accompanied by a "post bill" or memorandum of the number of letters it contained, and the postage charged on each. The "way bill," or bill of the through mails, was endorsed at each office with the time of the mail's arrival. Thus the Department was enabled to trace delays in the service and enforce penalties against contractors for lateness in the delivery of mails.

The business of "rating letters," that is, fixing the proper charge on them according to the distance, and the making up of mails, with the entering of the post bills and keeping of accounts, constituted the whole of the deputy's business, as at present. The laws merely provided that an office must be kept, and that any letters brought to the office within one half-hour of the departure of a mail must be sent in that mail.²

The early practice of making up a separate mail for each office soon became impossible of continuance as the bulk of the mails increased, and the scheme was soon adopted of designating certain towns as "distributing offices," to which the mails could be sent in one large bag, there to be separated into smaller parcels for the local offices. The first mention of these distributing offices in the Post Office laws is in the Act of 1802, which gives postmasters at such offices five per cent additional commission in recognition of their increased duties.³ In 1816 their number was 36, and in 1823, 48. They were not always located at the principal towns in their

¹ Lbk, Book I, 1825-1827, 58.

² Cf. Act of 1792, sec. 7.

³ Sec. 6, *Stat.*, ii, 191 ff.

respective states, but rather where the convenience of the Department required, at the junction points of important post roads.¹ The adoption of this plan contributed greatly to increase the efficiency of the service after 1800.

The whole remuneration of the deputy postmasters was in the commissions paid upon the moneys collected. Prior to the passage of the Act of 1792 the Postmaster General had the power to fix the amount of these commissions. Pickering's order of June, 1792, allowed not over 40 per cent of the gross receipts of the office until the commission was \$50 per year. If the receipts were between \$125 and \$167, \$50 was to be taken. If between \$167 and \$334, 30 per cent. From the latter figure to \$500 of receipts, \$100 was paid, and 20 per cent of the postage over \$500. In addition the postmaster was entitled to 50 per cent of the postage paid on newspapers. The method of ascertaining the proper commission was also set forth; namely, to charge 20 per cent on the first three quarters, and correct to 20 per cent on the year's receipts from the account rendered on December 31 of each year.²

This somewhat complicated method was replaced by the Act of 1792, which provided that 40 per cent should be paid until the commission was \$50, then 30 per cent to \$100, and over that, 20 per cent. The maximum compensation which any deputy postmaster might receive was \$1800. According to the scale, that would mean gross receipts of about \$8600, and in 1791 the gross receipts of the most profitable office, Philadelphia, were \$9674, and New York, the next in order, produced \$5537. In that year the postmasters' commissions varied from \$1.11 at Bennington, Vt., to \$2239 at Philadelphia.³

In 1797 the commissions were reduced slightly, though the law directed the Postmaster General to give the deputies "such compensation as shall be adequate to their respective services and expenses": \$30 was allowed on the first \$100 per quarter, \$25 on the next \$200, 20 per cent from \$400 to \$2000, and 8 per cent above the latter figure. In addition, \$25 per quarter was given to those postmasters who handled foreign mail, and a special allowance of

¹ Lbk, Book I, 1825-1827, 7.

² *Ibid.*, Book B, 1792-1793, 19-21.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 13.

not more than \$50 per quarter for working at night, that is between the hours of 9 P.M. and 5 A.M.¹ With the exception of an added 5 per cent to the deputies at distributing offices in 1802, no change in the law was made until 1810 when \$2000 was fixed as the maximum limit of compensation.² In 1815, on the plea of economy, Congress cut the compensation so that not over 20 per cent should be paid even on sums below \$150.³ Postmaster General Meigs at once called attention to the real hardship imposed by this law, and proposed a relief measure including the increase of the maximum compensation to \$2400.⁴ The old rate was thereupon restored, though the limit of \$2000 was kept, as before.⁵

Still the compensation of postmasters was small, as Meigs pointed out in 1819, especially in comparison with the reward of other offices of the Government of similar grade. Even in the largest cities the limit was \$2000, whereas subordinate officers in the customs service were paid up to \$3000 salary. Considering the increase in duties since 1810, when a \$2000 maximum had been established, and also, "the well-known increase in the expenses of living," the Postmaster General recommended raising the limit to \$3000.⁶ According to the accounts of the Department this would have affected only four offices in 1819 and but two in 1820.⁷

When calculating their commissions, deputies were supposed to pay certain expenses out of post-office funds. These included mostly things having to do with mail transportation, such as wrapping paper, twine, and wax for making up the mails, plain pine boxes for keeping letters, and the expenses of advertising unclaimed letters.⁸ The law fixing the \$2000 limit of compensation was held to apply to net compensation, or that which was left after paying office expenses. There was, apparently, some suspicion as to the expense accounts of the larger offices, so that in 1817 all postmasters receiving \$1000 or more were required to report their expenditures for rent, fuel, candles, clerk hire, sundries, fires, etc.⁹

¹ *Stat.*, i, 509.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 592.

³ *Ibid.*, iii, 220, 221.

⁴ Meigs to Ingham, Feb. 1, 1816, *A. S. P., P. O.*, 50.

⁵ *Stat.*, iii, 264.

⁶ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 92, 93.

⁸ *P. L. and R.*, 1817, 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

In 1822, in answer to a request from Congress, Meigs transmitted the accounts of the postmasters whose gross compensation had been over \$2000 in 1820 and 1821. There were eighteen in the former and twenty in the latter year, including those at most of the principal commercial centers in the country. In his letter of transmittal the Postmaster General suggested that some of the larger offices were overpaid and that it might be well to reduce commissions. He suggested cutting the rate on the excess above \$2000 receipts from 8 to 4 per cent and reducing the allowance for distributing offices from 5 to 3 per cent. The revenue of the Department was deficient, and this was one of Meigs's suggestions to remedy the bad condition.

Some interesting facts are revealed by an examination of the postmasters' accounts. Measured by gross commissions, New York was the most important office, though its net yield was less than that of several other offices. The maximum commission of \$2000 was received at Hartford, Conn., Nashville, Tenn., Philadelphia, and Washington, Ky. A consideration of other items reveals great differences in costs in various parts of the country. In Washington, D. C., clerks received on the average \$1166, while the frugal postmaster at Washington, Ky., paid only \$185 per year to his four assistants. The general range of clerks' salaries was between \$450 and \$625. In the matter of rent there were also notable variations, from \$80 in Portland, Me., to \$1200 in Philadelphia. The latter office shared with New York the honor of having the largest force — eight clerks. All things considered, the best showing was probably made by the postmaster at Portland, who, by reason of his \$80 rent and \$50 expense for fuel and his three \$225 clerks, saved \$1522 net out of a gross commission of \$2334.¹ When McLean came into office he found matters in the same state, but was not disposed to afford relief by recommending an increased compensation to the postmasters. He wrote to Clay in 1824 that deputy postmasters were indeed the most poorly paid officers under the Government, but that "competent persons to discharge the duties of postmasters have been found willing to serve in every part of the country." He pointed out that a small

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 92. All the figures given above relate to the fiscal year 1819-1820.

increase in compensation to each postmaster would afford but little relief while it would add greatly to the expenses of the Department.¹ From this statement and from others of the same officer with regard to mail transportation, it is clear that it was thought better to extend the post roads than to increase the pay of the deputies.

The account rendered by the deputy postmasters was simple, consisting merely of a statement of the receipts together with a list of letters despatched from their offices, and of free letters and way and ship letters received. These last items were reported as the bases for certain fees paid — two cents for each ship letter and free letter, and one cent for each way letter. An attempt was made to get postmasters to help the Department control the contractors by allowing the deputies twenty cents per month for a return of the time of arrival and departure of mails at their offices. A further advantage to postmasters came from the privilege of receiving and sending letters free.² This was a considerable advantage, and when lotteries were very popular, postmasters made great use of their special privilege. When McLean took office this practice was very widespread and he began a vigorous crusade against it. In 1825 the Postmaster at Canandaigua, N. Y., was removed for running a lottery agency, and using his frank in this business. It was discovered that he had sent 3080 free letters, and had received 1397 in one year in regard to the lottery business alone. Through McLean's efforts a law was passed in 1827 which forbade postmasters to act as agents for lottery tickets or to frank the same or circulars concerning them.³ The Postmaster General had been active in his efforts to suppress the practice of sending lottery circulars as "newspapers." In 1828 he wrote to one postmaster that a certain paper wholly devoted to lottery advertisements was being circulated; that this was not a newspaper, any more than a volume of poetry could be considered a newspaper because poems were occasionally printed in newspapers.⁴

¹ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 243 ff.

² By the Act of 1794 deputies could send and receive free letters up to one-half ounce in weight. Cf. *Stat.*, i, 362. This privilege was continued in later acts.

³ *Ibid.*, iv, 238, 239. Cf. Lbk, Book T, 1827-1828, 370.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book I, 1825-1827, 23, 42, 43; Book U, 182.

CHAPTER VIII

POLITICS IN THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

As the Post Office grew, and its agents increased in number, attention was more and more turned toward the possibilities of patronage in this department. In 1828 McLean reported that, including mail contractors and their agents, as well as subordinate clerks in the local offices, there were about 27,000 persons concerned with the handling of the mails. Of these, 8000 were deputy postmasters, appointed by the Postmaster General.¹ The growth of the army of post-office servants had been foreseen in the earliest days, as is evident from the debate over the first post-office laws. But in spite of the fears of those who pointed out the dangers involved, Congress had refused to alter the custom of colonial days and continued the power of appointment in the hands of the Postmaster General. In fact, most of the discussion turned on the question, not of men, but of offices and roads. Representatives Hartley, of Pennsylvania, and Vining, of Delaware, protested in 1791 against allowing the President any voice in the establishment of offices, holding that an unscrupulous president would misuse such power.² That was not an era in which men built up political machinery through the Civil Service. The Federalists, while excluding their opponents from office, rigidly insisted on fitness as the first qualification of a candidate. Professor Fish has said that, "on the whole, it seems probable that the administration of public business bore a better relation to the business standards of the country under the Federalists than at any subsequent period."³ Even Jefferson's slur on the Office, that he "feared its fidelity" and would "trust it with nothing important," seems to have been promulgated for political purposes rather than as the result of experience.⁴

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 184.

² *Annals*, 2d Congress, 232, 235. The date is Dec. 6.

³ Fish, *Civil Service and the Patronage*, 27.

⁴ *Annals*, 2d Congress, 232.

After he had observed the workings of the Post Office for several years under the Federalist régime, Jefferson wrote to Madison in 1796 regarding it:

I view it as a source of boundless patronage to the executive, jobbing to members of Congress and their friends and a bottomless abyss of public money. You will begin by only appropriating the surplus of the post-office revenues; but other revenues will soon be called in to their aid and it will be a source of eternal scramble among the members, who can get the most money wasted in their states; and they will always get most who are meanest.¹

Evidently he was more impressed by the Congressional scramble for "pork" than by the abuse of executive power through the patronage. Professor Fish has brought out that it was Jefferson himself who, by his recognition of party allegiance as a controlling factor in the appointment and removal of officers, introduced the spoils system into the Civil Service.² It was under Jefferson that Postmaster General Granger carried out in 1802 the first of the many "proscriptions" which have taken place in the history of the Department.³ It has been noted that this sweep was carried out with a courtesy which had been sadly lacking on other occasions. Several of the intended victims were given warning of their approaching fate, and even trained their successors in the duties of the positions.⁴

Much writing in justification of the removal of postmasters was found during Granger's administration (1801-1814), and there is evidence that the Postmaster General was more moderate than many of his party. Granger took high ground in writing to the Republicans of Fairfield County, Conn.

It has ever been my opinion that an executive officer is responsible for the abuse of his powers of appointment, and for flagrant misuse, liable to impeachment. It follows that a just regard both for his character and security should induce such officer to act with caution and to secure in his possession the evidence and such facts as would justify his conduct before he offers an injury to, or mars the happiness of any person acting under him.⁵

Further on in the same letter he said:

To remove people from the subordinate offices for a difference of opinion is both unjust and impolitic, — unjust; because the Deity and not Govern-

¹ Jefferson to Madison, March 6, 1796; *Writings*, ix, 324, 325.

² Fish, *op. cit.*, 51. ³ *Ibid.*, 41. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 44. ⁵ Lbk, Book S, 26.

ment gave man his rational faculties, and the free use of them and the elective franchise ought to be secure from party bars. Impolitic; because a wise Government would soothe, not irritate, because the contrary rule would change the Government from being the common father of the people and bring it down to the humble head of a party.¹

This declaration, evidently made for party purposes, should be supplemented by some extracts from letters written to displaced postmasters. In one of these Granger said:

Knowing as I did that most of the officers under me had been in the habits [*sic*] of associating and corresponding as well on politics as on business with those lately in authority from whom the people had removed their confidence; and elevated to office men whose political principles they believed better calculated to preserve the constitution and public prosperity, and having a general knowledge of the most prominent recent events, it occurred to me that some removals would become necessary, as well to effect an equal participation and enjoyment of office by the two great classes of citizens who are designated by the terms of Federalists and Republicans as to preserve and maintain confidence in the department.²

Such naïve reasoning is unusual, even for those early times, when confidence in a government department was made to depend on equal enjoyment of office by members of both parties.

One of the chief "reforms" effected was in the removal of postmasters who were printers or editors, especially if they were of Federalist sympathies. To one such deputy Granger wrote that "the printer of a newspaper is not the most proper person to discharge the duties of a postmaster owing to the jealousies which will exist, and also . . . the public interest will be promoted by the appointment of a new postmaster."³ It was this campaign which caused the Federalist editor of the New York "Evening Post" to remark:

Mr. Jefferson's Postmaster General, Gideon Granger . . . in the plenitude of his sagacity, discovered that a "printer of a newspaper" is more susceptible to perjury and mal-conduct in transacting the duties required in that Department than in any other profession, notwithstanding a difference of opinion hitherto held by predecessors as experienced and nearly as respectable as Citizen Gideon.⁴

There was, perhaps, some danger that printers or editors might abuse their franking privilege in getting news for their sheets, and

¹ Lbk, Book F, 26.

³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1802.

² New York *Evening Post*, March 2, 1802.

⁴ *Ibid.*, March 6, 1802.

some might even have been found who would delay information addressed to competing publishers. Why this should have been the case with Federalists alone is difficult to understand, yet we know that Republican printers were undisturbed in their offices.¹

There were some who feared the abuse of the power which the Postmaster General might wield through the patronage. On January 7, 1814, Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, speaking on the general subject of patronage, declared in the House of Representatives that in his opinion that of the Postmaster General was the most subject to abuse. "It does appear," said he, "that unless some remedy be applied to end this evil and that without delay, we are in danger of a new order of Jesuits in this country, with an unlimited General at their head to dictate his orders, and enforce them, under all the pains and penalties of removal from their deputation."² He concluded his attack with the demand that appointments in this department be put on the same basis as those in other Government departments, that is, appointment by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. To this end he introduced a resolution calling for a committee to investigate the post-office laws and amend them, "so as to render them more conformable than they are at present to the principles of the Constitution."³ Although the House accepted this resolution by a vote of 73 to 53, the matter was placed in the hands of a committee, where it slumbered peacefully until April 16, when the committee was discharged because it was too late in the session for action to be taken at that time.⁴ Meanwhile, on March 8, Ingersoll had introduced a bill providing that all postmasters at distributing offices and in all incorporated cities be appointed by the President and the Senate. No action was taken on this bill.

Several times within the fifteen years following 1814 the suggestion of putting the post-office appointments into the President's hands was made. In 1816 John Quincy Adams recorded in his diary a joint report of Monroe and Crawford, made in a Cabinet meeting, suggesting that all postmasters whose commissions amounted to \$2000 a year or over should be appointed by the

¹ New York *Evening Post*, March 31, 1903.

³ *Ibid.*, 866.

² *Annals*, 13th Congress, 1, 865.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 2025.

President, with the consent of the Senate.¹ On May 1, 1822, the House of Representatives voted down a proposal of a similar nature.² After the elaborate investigation of the subject of patronage by the Senate in 1826, the report of the Benton Committee included approval of this plan. A bill to this end was among the six reported at that time, but, like the others, it was tabled, after having been warmly debated and passed to the second reading.³

The history of the relations between the President and Postmaster General in regard to the patronage shows that the amount of control exercised over the Department varied greatly with the chief executive. Madison, for example, was clearly offended at the appointment of Dr. Leib to the Philadelphia office in 1814, and as a result he dismissed Postmaster General Granger from his place.⁴ Monroe, however, took a different attitude and apparently did not interfere at all in such matters. McLean, who served as Postmaster General from June, 1823, to the end of John Quincy Adams's term, paid a striking tribute to Monroe's conduct in this matter. In 1829 he wrote:

In the use of the patronage, that most delicate branch of executive power, Mr. Monroe was governed by those enlarged and elevated views, required by the interests of the country. . . . From the official relations which I bore toward the President towards the close of his administration it became my duty to consult him in making certain appointments. But in no case did he intimate a preference for any one of the candidates whose names I laid before him. His answer was uniformly, "The law has given you the right to make the appointment; I shall be satisfied with your decision; do what the public interests require."⁵

Monroe's conduct in the most notable case which arose under his administration illustrates in a striking manner his scrupulous observance of the law, as to both letter and spirit. In 1822 Postmaster General Meigs was considering the appointment of Solomon Van Rensselaer to the post office at Albany, when Van Buren and King, the two New York Senators, brought forward the claim of another candidate. The weight of the opposition caused Meigs to place the case in the President's hands; but Monroe refused to

¹ Adams, *Memoirs*, v, 482.

² *Annals*, 17th Congress, i, 1774.

³ The report in *Cong. Deb.*, ii, pt. 2, 133. The debate is in *ibid.*, pt. i, *passim*.

⁴ Salmon, *Appointing Powers of the President*, 43, 44; Cf. Hildreth, vi, 458.

⁵ *Niles's Register*, xliii, 8.

settle it, leaving the decision to the Postmaster General, who gave the place to Van Rensselaer.¹ The affair made quite a stir at the time and is important because of the principle involved. Monroe apparently established a precedent against interference of the president in post-office appointments. John Quincy Adams followed the same course, though he was often suspicious of the appointments made by McLean, who was known to be a Jackson man.²

The force of character of McLean and his strong views on his duties and rights in the Post Office Department doubtless contributed to bring about the final move of admitting the Postmaster General into the Cabinet. From the letters exchanged between McLean and Edward Everett much may be learned of McLean's views. He emphatically denied Everett's imputation that he had used his patronage in behalf of either Calhoun or Jackson, saying in regard to the latter:

In no case has a candidate been recommended to me as a friend of General Jackson. The gentlemen who know me and belong to the opposition would not presume to such a step.³ . . . Before I would lend myself in this matter and prostitute the patronage of my office, I must lose all self-respect and a thorough change must take place in my views on the subject.⁴

In reply to Everett's suggestion that all offices ought to support the administration, McLean proclaimed his independence, saying:

If subserviency to the President and an ardent zeal in the promotion of his personal views shall be the passport to office, where the individual is qualified, however objectionable he may be to the people, offices will be filled, not by high-minded and patriotic citizens, but by fawning sycophants loud in their professions, without principle, but ready at all times to execute the biddings of their master.⁵ . . . I would scorn to hold any office, as a creature of any administration.⁶

In regard to the Cabinet officers, he felt the case to be somewhat different.

A wide distinction [he wrote] exists between the members of the Cabinet, and other officers of the Government. There must be unity in this part of the executive. The members of the Cabinet are the sustainers of the Presi-

¹ Fish, *op. cit.*, 62-64.

² Cf. Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 547; vii, 275, 348, 351-356; viii, 8, 9, 193.

³ *Mass. Hist. Soc., Proc.*, 3, i, 364 n.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 387.

dent; and as questions are often, if not generally, decided by the concurrence of the majority of them, it becomes the decision of the Cabinet, and each member is bound to support it. This is the condition on which the office is accepted. But, as other officers of the Government are not consulted, and can have no influence in the policy of the Cabinet, the main obligation is not imposed upon them.

But as for Cabinet influence over himself, he would have none of it. "The Cabinet shall never think and decide for me unless I am a member of it," he wrote to Everett.¹

On the subject of the patronage McLean was equally clear in the expression of his views. In August, 1823, about a month after he had assumed the duties of the office, he wrote regarding the proposed removal of a deputy postmaster:

I have laid it down as a rule from which no consideration will induce me to depart, that I will remove no postmaster unless substantial objections be made, and supported, so that his continuance would be prejudicial [*sic*] to the public good.

And again:

I know not why the feelings and character and interests of postmasters should not be respected equally as much as other officers of the Government of equal grade; there will always be some odium attached to a removal and I wish to make the post of the highest consequence to the individual by having it well understood that no removal will take place so long as the officer shall be deemed worthy of public confidence.

On another occasion he wrote: "A removal without substantial ground of objection against the individual must be productive of pernicious consequences to the public."²

The next year he wrote some Congressmen who were urging the removal of a certain deputy postmaster for political reasons:

Mr. Lewis, I learn, is opposed in politics to the administration and to the dometent [*sic*] party in Connecticut; in some of the States political contests are yet warm and it may be desirable that the Republican party should be strengthened, by the patronage of the general Government.

I entirely subscribe to this policy provided such patronage can be esteemed [*sic*] without doing injustice. In making new appointments, such considerations are important, but when for this ground removals are applied for, a case of a very different character is presented. No officer of the Government takes more pleasure than I feel, to gratify the wishes of representatives of the people. But their wishes may not always accord with the policy which

¹ *Mass. Hist. Soc., Proc.*, 3, i, 387.

² Lbk, Book B, 1823, 403, 420.

should be adhered to in managing the expensive and complicated matters of this Department.

I have set out with the determination to make no removals from office, except for substantial cause and after a full opportunity for defence shall have been offered to the postmaster. If in one case I should depart from this rule, I must depart from it in all cases. If I should remove one postmaster on account of his politics, I must be consistent and remove every other one in whom the same objection may be made.

Is this policy proper? Is it necessary? Does any Department of the Government pursue it? Even where party struggles were the most ardent and the entire administration was endangered by the strength and violence of the opposition changes were not generally made. Those times have passed, and this may be called the era of good feeling. So far as the late political parties are concerned the remark is certainly just, as it applies to the country at large. In my opinion a magnanimous and liberal policy should be pursued towards the minority. They should not be prescribed [*sic*] or refused an ordinary measure of justice. When they enjoy office, and conduct discreetly and discharge their duties faithfully, it is my opinion, they should not be discharged.¹

Even when the "era of good feeling" had given way to the bitterness of the struggle between Adams and Jackson, there is no evidence that McLean departed from the position he had taken.² When vacancies occurred he usually filled them with men favorable to Jackson.³ Adams felt this keenly and was distrustful of his Postmaster General, even at one time contemplating his dismissal from office.⁴ The magnanimity of the President and McLean's splendid record at the head of the Department caused his retention. Adams wrote in his diary on November 30, 1827, a tribute to the efficiency of his management, but added that he was "worse than equivocal" in his conduct towards himself.⁵ But after Adams, came Jackson, and the spoils system was brought into the Office. In all, about 600 deputy postmasters were re-

¹ Lbk, Book D, 1824-1825, 25, 26.

² In July, 1829, after his removal from office *Niles's Register*, a paper not favorable to Jackson, paid McLean the following compliment: "Not one of the postmasters recently in office had been appointed to supercede others because of political opinion, so far as we have ever heard; but even if so, it was to have been expected that they were rather against than favorable to the last administration — McLean being understood as a decided friend of the election of General Jackson; yet we do not believe that he suffered his private feelings to enter into the performance of his public duties, having a full estimation of the delicacy and difficulty of the widely extended and highly respected business of his Department." xxxvi, 314.

³ Fish, *op. cit.*, 125.

⁴ Learned, 241.

⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, vii, 363, 364.

moved out of a total of 8000,¹ and a clean sweep was made in the Department offices. Abraham and Phineas Bradley, who had long been First and Second Assistant Postmasters General, were removed, notwithstanding the fact that McLean had recommended them to his successor.²

It was but natural that the Jacksonian party, with their avowed intention of securing for themselves the spoils of office and their announced policy of rewarding friends and punishing enemies, should have cast hungry eyes toward the Post Office. It is equally clear that, in order to handle this matter most effectively, the Postmaster General must be a member of the President's official family. McLean's steady insistence on the importance of his position and his well-known independence made him the logical candidate for the place; and indeed the announcement of the proposed Cabinet in the Washington "Telegraph," the mouthpiece of the incoming Administration, on February 26, 1829, contained his name as third on the list, following the names of the Secretaries of State and of the Treasury.³ It happened, however, that another man, William T. Barry, of Kentucky, was appointed to the Post Office, while McLean became a member of the Supreme Court. There is no direct evidence as to the events which caused the change, but the reason is clear enough. Amos Kendall said that McLean declined to serve when he found that he could not stand against Duff Green and the vindictive members of the Jacksonian party, who were clamoring for a thorough proscription in the Post Office Department.⁴ John Quincy Adams said that McLean "declined serving as a broom to sweep the Post Office."⁵ There can be little doubt that McLean's views on patronage had been made known to others than Everett, and he could not easily have taken the place offered; but Barry, who had no such hampering scruples, was elevated to the position and became formally a member of the Cabinet. Learned concludes after a thorough study of the subject that the practice of admitting the Postmaster

¹ Fish, *op. cit.*, 125. Postmaster General Barry reported to a Congressional committee that between March 4, 1829, and March 22, 1830, 491 removals were made. *A.S.P., P.O.*, 242.

² *Ibid.*, 326.

³ Learned, 244.

⁴ Kendall, *Autobiography*, 304, 305.

⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, viii, 99, 109, 110.

General to the Cabinet "probably tended in the long run to invigorate the service."¹ It is worthy of note that the first English Postmaster General to become a regular member of the Cabinet took his seat in 1830.²

So Barry, the politician, succeeded McLean who, as Adams wrote, "was removed from the Post Office because he refused to be made the instrument of that sweeping proscription of postmasters which is to be one of the samples of the promised reforms."³ When this change had been made, the work of removal went on in a most haphazard way. The most celebrated instance is that of the appointment of Norton to the post office at Hartford, Conn. This officer was put into a place made vacant by the removal of the former incumbent. He moved his family from Washington to Hartford, and after serving for precisely one day, was removed to make a place for another deserving partisan.⁴ With such conditions prevailing, it is not surprising that the Post Office under Barry's management made a most dismal showing from every point of view. With the coming of the spoils system the most important business enterprise of the Government was doomed to a career that would mean ruin to any private business.

¹ Learned, 251.

² *Ibid.*

³ Adams, *Memoirs*, vii, 112.

⁴ *Niles's Register*, xxxvi, 149, 244.

CHAPTER IX

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS OF THE POST OFFICE

A PART of the postal system which the United States inherited from the days before the Constitution was a set of postal rates. These, like all previous rates since the British Act of 1765, were classified according to distance. Established by the voluminous Ordinance of 1782, they remained in force until the passage of the permanent post-office law of 1792. A very simple set of rates, they charged single letters as follows:

	<i>dwt.</i> (<i>of silver</i>)	<i>gr.</i>	<i>cents</i>
Up to 60 miles	1	8	8
60-100 "	2	0	12
100-200 "	2	16	16
Each additional 100 miles.....		16	4

These applied to single letters, that is, those composed of one sheet of paper only. If there were two sheets, or three, the rates were proportionately increased. In those days it was often thought safer to send letters in packets to prevent their being lost. Such packets were charged at the rate of four times single postage for each ounce.

These rates were burdensome in the case of letters sent long distances, as Postmaster General Osgood pointed out in 1790.¹ Accordingly, in 1792, Congress established new rates intended to remedy this situation. Nine rates were provided, covering eight zones up to 450 miles, and fixing a flat rate beyond that distance, as follows:²

Single letters	<i>cents</i>
Up to 30 miles	6
30 to 60 "	8
60 to 100 "	10
100 to 150 "	12½
150 to 200 "	15
200 to 250 "	17
250 to 350 "	20
350 to 450 "	22
Over 450 "	25

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 6.

² *Stat.*, i, 232.

Some reductions were made in rates, notably in the case of letters sent less than 30 miles, where the rate dropped from 8 cents to 6 cents, and in the more distant zones. The last was the result of a deliberate attempt to favor the remote parts of the country and to promote commerce through increasing correspondence. A flat rate of 25 cents was placed on all letters sent more than 450 miles. This meant a considerable saving for merchants dealing with distant clients, for the old rate had put a charge of 37 cents on a letter from Savannah, Ga., to New York.¹ The changes apparently produced the desired results, for the gross revenue from postage increased from \$67,444 in 1792 to \$104,747 in 1793, and this without any increase in the length of post roads. The last statement raises an interesting question, which must be met in the discussion of postal rates and their effect on the office during the early years of its development. Revenue from postage is evidently the product of two factors, rates and volume of business, that is, number of letters despatched. Now, if the territory served remained constant, some relation could be shown between rates and volume of correspondence; but as a matter of fact Congress was constantly passing laws which increased the length of the post roads and thus opened up new parts of the country to the Post Office. Some regions became at once productive from the standpoint of the office, but in others the amount of letter-writing was very small. More serious than this, however, is the fact that the constant lengthening of the post roads makes it impossible to calculate with precision the effect of rate changes. These can only be estimated, save in rare instances like the one just mentioned, where there was no change in the post roads for two or three years.

In 1799 another schedule of rates was put in force, viz.:²

Single letter	cents
Up to 40 miles	8
40 to 90 "	10
90 to 150 "	12½
150 to 300 "	17
300 to 500 "	30
Over 500 "	35

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 6.

² *Stat.*, i, 733.

The number of classes was reduced from nine to six, which it was thought would facilitate the rating and despatching of letters. The charge for the shortest distance (now made 40 miles or less) was increased to 8 cents, as it had been found that the six-cent rate hardly paid the cost of handling the letters. The rate on distant letters was somewhat reduced, but those for the shorter journeys were increased slightly. Postmaster General Habersham evidently believed in charging what the traffic would bear, for he wrote:

The advance on the low postages is so small that the alteration will hardly be noticed and a postage of 12½ cents or under is so inconsiderable that it is freely paid, but in all cases above that sum it seems to be something of an object and it then begins to be called money.¹

The effect of these changes upon the revenue is somewhat obscured by a considerable increase in the length of the post roads which occurred at practically the same time; but apparently the rate of growth of the postal receipts was somewhat checked. The check was only temporary, however, for in four or five years the rate of increase had returned to the figure which had prevailed before the change in rates.

No further change was made in postal rates until the War of 1812 called for the exploitation of every financial resource of the Government. On October 10, 1814, it was proposed by the Ways and Means Committee of the House to increase the rates 50 per cent, to provide additional revenue.² The Department had paid \$85,000 into the Treasury in 1812 and \$35,000 in 1813. Later in the same month Dallas's report on the finances suggested an increase of 100 per cent, and estimated the produce at \$500,000, an exaggerated expectation indeed, since the gross revenue of the Department had been but \$703,155 in 1813.³ The general revenue act of December 23, 1814, increased the rates of postage 50 per cent over those established in 1799.⁴ This provision was repealed in February, 1816, so that the higher charges were in force for but one year.⁵ In that period the gross revenue rose from \$730,000 to \$1,043,000. Even the repeal of the high rates did not check the

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 19.

² *Ibid.*, 867.

³ *Ibid.*, 252.

² *A. S. P., Fin.*, iii, 854.

⁴ *Stat.*, iii, 159.

growth of the revenue, which, after a slight drop in 1816, recovered strongly and never thereafter fell below \$1,000,000.

Secretary Dallas had urged that the increased rates be maintained for the sake of revenue,¹ but the House of Representatives declined to follow this course and accepted the views of their Committee which said in its report:

The communication of intelligence between different parts of the country, it appears to the Committee to be the just policy of our Government to facilitate and encourage; and although it might have been right to exact a revenue from it under circumstances which made it necessary to apply every resource to the defence of the States, the present situation of the Treasury may well allow its repeal.²

A new act was proposed to the House of Representatives by Postmaster General Meigs in January, 1816. He pointed out that letters sent very short distances, as, for example, between Washington and Georgetown, were so heavily burdened that they were rarely sent in the mails. He suggested a rate of four cents for letters sent less than five miles. This extremely low rate would attract all such to the post office. In compensation the lower rates were to be increased somewhat.³ Congress rejected these proposals, but passed a new act in April, 1816, fixing the following rates:⁴

Single letter	cents
Up to 30 miles	6
30 to 80 "	10
80 to 150 "	12½
150 to 400 "	18½
Over 400 "	25

The significant features are the reduction of the number of classes from six to five, and the restoration of the six-cent rate for the shortest distance. No other changes of moment were made in the rates. These were in force until 1836.

An examination of the course of postal rates during the first forty years of the office reveals clearly certain general tendencies. First: the system of classification of rates according to distances, the "zone system," as it is sometimes called, was used throughout the period. In this, as in so many other matters in the Post Office,

¹ *A. S. P., Fin.*, iii, 16.

² *Ibid.*, 64.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 49.

⁴ *Stat.*, iii, 264.

the administration followed British practice, with which the officers were familiar. The prevailing theory of postal charges held that the cost of transporting letters varied in proportion to the distance they were carried. Rowland Hill had not yet advanced his new ideas or converted the British Government to the flat-rate system. The second tendency to be observed is in the specially favorable rates given to letters sent long distances. An early recognition of the disadvantages of the distant parts of the country and a desire to remove these is to be found in the earliest laws and discussions on the Post Office. A reduced rate and rapid extension of service were granted at first by the public-spirited citizens of the older communities, and they came to be demanded as a right by the Westerners when they became dominant in Congress. Instances of sectional feeling and the desire to make the East bear the expense of advantages granted to the West may be seen in debates in postal affairs after 1825. Not only the establishment of post roads, which had always been an occasion for strife between the localities, but even the matter of postal rates, was made a matter of controversy between the sections.

X This is perhaps best seen in the attempt made in 1832 to lower the rates of postage. Senator Sprague of Maine opened the contest by introducing a resolution directing the Committee on the Post Office to bring in a bill reducing postage. This was opposed by Grundy of the Post Office Committee, who sought to substitute a motion for an inquiry in place of a peremptory order. Sprague, Clayton, and Holmes took part in the debate in favor of the original resolution, while Grundy bore the brunt of the opposition. The contest was waged for three days, and on the third day the sectional issue, which had only been hinted at before, was brought to the front by Buckner of Missouri, who declared in explicit terms that the West would not allow the proposed change. A reduction of rates, he urged, would make the Office a charge upon the Treasury and would necessitate additional taxation, of which the West would have to bear its share. This they would not tolerate, but would keep the rates as they stood, since the East now paid more postage than the West.¹ On the roll-call that followed,

¹ *Cong. Deb.*, ix, 43.

Grundy's amendment was carried and the reduction of rates averted. The vote was close, standing 20 to 18, the division being almost wholly on sectional lines. New England gave 1 vote for and 11 against the proposition; the Middle States (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, and Kentucky) 4 votes for and 6 against, while the Southern and Southwestern States gave 15 for and but 1 against the measure.¹

But if the newer portions of the country were favored in the matter of rates, they reaped an even greater advantage in the postage fixed on newspapers. The early discussion over this matter has already been mentioned.² The fears of such as Gerry regarding a Court press were entirely disarmed by the subsequent experience of the country. The rates of one cent for each 100 miles and one and one-half cents beyond that distance were established in 1792,³ and remained unchanged thereafter, except that the one-cent rate was later made to apply to all papers sent to points in the state where they were published, and the rate of one and one-half cents to all sent outside, regardless of distance.

These rates, well below the cost of transportation, were of great importance in building up the newspapers of the country; but more important still was the practice incorporated in the Act of 1792 of allowing the free exchange of copies between newspaper publishers. Professor Bretz, who has made a careful study of the rise of newspapers in the West, has stated that they could hardly have existed without this aid from the general Government.⁴ Yet the burden was great, and the Department sought at times to reduce the number of papers sent free for exchange. Every such move was, of course, met by the most bitter outcries from the publishers. In 1822 it was proposed to abolish the privilege, and the papers raised a protest against this "unconstitutional scheme of stopping in any degree the sources of that information which distinguishes Americans from the people of all other countries."⁵ In 1825 there were 677 newspapers published in the country, accord-

¹ *Cong. Deb.*, ix, 49.

² See *ante*, pp. 114, 115.

³ *Stat.*, i, 232.

⁴ *American Historical Association Report*, 1909, 147.

⁵ *Detroit Gazette*, April 5, 1822; quoted in Bretz, 147.

ing to a list transmitted by Postmaster General McLean to Ingham in Congress.¹

The Postmaster General proposed to limit the free exchanges to fifty for each paper, but even this was called, by a Cincinnati paper, "a direct blow at the strongest bulwark of free government."² When the considerable services of the newspapers to the politicians are borne in mind, it is not surprising that their pleas carried weight with the legislators and that the much-prized right of free exchanges remained untouched.

The chief problems which were created by the transportation of newspapers in the mails had to do with their safe carriage and with the collection of postage upon them. The first difficulty was largely a matter of preserving the papers from destruction in transit. Most of them were put into the post office still damp from the press, and they were rarely wrapped sufficiently to protect either themselves or the rest of the mail. Early experiences of the destruction of letters by this cause taught the Department that newspapers must be carried in a separate place from the letter mail. An effort to secure this resulted in exposure of the newspaper mails, which were carried under the stage-driver's seat or outside the body of the mail wagon. Wrappers with directions were often destroyed,³ leaving the post office the burden of undeliverable mails. McLean wrote to one printer in 1826:

Where newspapers are folded damp from the press, and are only secured by a tender envelope and paste, it is unreasonable to expect that they will be safely conveyed to the place of their destination. Strong wrapping paper and twine should be used and the direction should not be left to the least competent person in the printing office, which is sometimes the case.⁴

A much less frequent complaint in regard to the transportation of newspapers was that they were interfered with or obstructed in transit. At first there seems to have been some fear that the Government would hinder the circulation of newspapers containing things obnoxious to it, and a fine of \$50 was provided in the law

¹ Lbk, Book I, 1825-1827, 60.

² *National Republican and Ohio Political Register*, Feb. 25, 1825. Quoted in Bretz, 147.

³ Cf. Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 491.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book I, 1825-1827, 234.

of 1792 for any postal employee who should take a paper out of the mail. The riders on long journeys sometimes read over the papers they carried; for we find a circular of the Postmaster General in 1815 warning all contractors and their agents that they had no right to that enjoyment.¹ Occasionally a complaint of obstruction of papers was made, but such cases were rare. One Caleb Atwater wrote from Circleville, Ohio, to Postmaster General McLean, in 1826:

Your circular of the 27th emboldens me to say that my papers from Cincinnati either reach me, that is, not more than one, in three, or four, at all, and those which do arrive, come from the south, north and even from the east. Sometimes since the date of your circular they now arrive from the west and in season. The paper I take is opposed to the powers that be, and as sure as the paper contains something not agreeable to those powers, it is sure never to reach me. From all I can discover there is a perfect system of this kind in full, and successful operation all over the Nation. Until I saw your circular, I did suppose the complaints might aggravate this evil, especially if I was known to the culprit as finding any fault.²

Even in times of great political conflict such occurrences were most unusual. Newspapers were often carelessly treated, but rarely deliberately stolen or tampered with.

The collection of postage on newspapers offered considerable difficulty. Publishers were indisposed to prepay, not only because of the frequent losses in transit but because it was not customary to pay even letter postage in advance. In order to secure their greatest efforts the postmasters were allowed 50 per cent commission on their collections of newspaper postage, although 30 per cent was the highest rate allowed on letter postage. The custom grew up of sending newspapers in packets open at one end, to permit of counting the contents. Each packet was indorsed with the number of papers it held and their destination, but usually postmasters merely took the indorsement as evidence of the contents and did not bother to count the papers. This was the practice when McLean came to the Department,³ and he was early convinced that the Government was losing money through this state of affairs. He devised a new plan, by which each printer was

¹ Lbk, Book T, 298.

² Atwater to McLean, June 19, 1826. *McL. P.*, i, 120.

³ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 28, 29.

required to certify to the Department the number of papers sent, specifying all those sent free and those sent out of the state. Postmasters were required to get payment of postage for three months in advance. These reforms caused an increase of 50 per cent in the revenue from newspaper postage.¹

Under the early postal laws, printed matter, other than newspapers, had no standing. Postmaster General Pickering held in 1792 that magazines were chargeable at letter postage; but this seems to have been an isolated case.² At a later date consideration for the speed of the mails caused an order excluding magazines and pamphlets from the main post routes. Meigs wrote in 1815 to a man in Cincinnati: "It is believed that pamphlets and magazines interrupt the regular and due conveyance of newspapers to your section of the country." Permission to circulate such publications was granted only in the case of religious societies.³

The Act of 1816, however, admitted these publications to the mails at rates varying, according to distance, from one to two cents per sheet. In computing the charge, four folio, eight quarto, or sixteen octavo pages were counted as a single sheet. This rate applied to the journals of state legislatures as well as other periodical publications.⁴ In 1825 the rates were increased to one and one-half cents for distances less than 100 miles and two and one-half cents for distances beyond that, and a new class, with rates of four and six cents, was fixed for non-periodical publications.⁵ This was intended to meet the case of "price-currents" and the occasional pamphlets which were widely circulated, usually not prepaid.⁶ The rates seemed reasonable enough, although there were complaints from publishers, who talked about "taxes on knowledge" in a manner since made very familiar by agitators for cheap postage.

A petition sent to Congress from Boston in 1832 asserted that matter which was charged a cent and a half a sheet by the Post Office could be sent by carrier for nine cents a pound to a distance of 300 miles, and that the rates on pamphlets and newspapers

¹ Lbk, Book A, 426, 428, 430.

⁴ *Stat.*, iii, 364; cf. *P. L. and R.*, 1816, 77.

² *Ibid.*, 495.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iv, 102.

³ *Ibid.*, Book T, 184, 186.

⁶ Lbk, Book A, 1823-1824, 463, 464; Book G, 1825, 368.

were excessive.¹ But the Senate Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads in the same year reported adversely on a proposition to abolish newspaper postage, showing that as nearly as could be estimated this class of matter furnished fourteen fifteenths of the weight of the mail and paid only one ninth of the revenue.² This would indicate that newspapers and pamphlets were not contributing their share toward the support of the office, but it did not remove the objection of the Boston publishers. The Government may well have been paying an exorbitant price for mail-contractors' services, though it must be borne in mind that transportation rates within 300 miles of Boston were probably as low as they were anywhere in the country. Taking all the services into account, the average cost per mile of post road in 1831 was \$10.87. Some of these were daily coach trips, some only service by rider once a week; but it was estimated that the new routes established in that year could not be served once a week for less than \$5 per mile.³

An exact answer to the question of the relation of periodicals to the Post Office cannot be given, though it appears that even at this date they were not made to bear their proportionate share of the expenses of the Office. Consciously and deliberately they have been favored by the rate-makers, that is, the members of Congress. The question whether the writing of letters should be encouraged rather than the circulation of newspapers is an academic question merely. So long as the Post Office is democratically controlled there will be but one answer given by the politicians, and that will not be in favor of the letter-writers.

Closely allied to the question of newspaper postage is the matter of franking. This part of postal development illustrates better perhaps than any other the tendency for a pernicious growth to result from a small and seemingly innocent beginning. In the days before the Constitution the members of the Continental Congress had been unwilling to forego their privilege of franking, even when the Office was in dire financial straits. An attempt was made after 1789 to keep this practice within bounds. The chief officers of the executive departments, and those subordinates whose business

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 341-343.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 348.

² *Ibid.*, 347; cf. *Lbk*, Book X, 1829-1830, 67-69.

made it very necessary, were the only ones to be so favored; but even at that period Postmaster General Osgood feared that the practice might have been too much extended.¹ But then the real extension began, and minor Government officers and all deputy postmasters were added to the list. These officials not only sent, but also received, their letters free. Members of Congress, who had at first been limited to the period when Congress was actually in session, allowed themselves at first thirty and then sixty days before and after each session. Ex-Presidents, their widows, signers of the Declaration of Independence, and other prominent citizens were relieved of paying postage.

At first such exceptions were insignificant compared with the result which followed the extension of franking to whole classes of matter, such as public documents. In the beginning only special documents like particular messages of the President were sent free,² but after 1819 all documents transmitted to Congress by the President or any Department head were made free.³ There is no way of determining accurately the burden imposed by franked matter. From 1790 to 1836, the answer to requests for information from the Department upon this subject was uniformly that "the Post Office accounts are not kept in such form as to enable me to ascertain the actual number of free letters."⁴ It was estimated in 1832 that the postage at ordinary rates on matter carried free on Government business outside of postal affairs would have amounted in 1831 to over \$500,000.⁵ This means not only a loss of revenue of that amount, but an expense for transportation and a commission to the postmasters of one cent on each franked letter or package.

As the total gross receipts from postage in 1831 were \$2,250,000, the size of the burden entailed by the franking system can be seen to have been enormous. Here is an abuse which seems inevitable in the business enterprises of a republic, not the least of which, it should be said in passing, consists in the failure to take such ac-

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 2.

² Cf. *Stat.*, iii, 55, with reference to Madison's Message of Nov. 29, 1809.

³ *Ibid.*, 537, 539.

⁴ Memo., in *McL. P.*, i, 189; cf. Osgood's statement in 1790, *A. S. P., P. O.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 348.

count of the services rendered the Government by the Post Office as should reveal at once any extravagance or undue extension of this costly and unremunerative business.

The questions just raised in regard to financial burdens entailed by franked matter and by underpaid periodicals lead to an inquiry as to the precise purpose of the Department. Was it intended to raise a revenue? Was service the aim? And if so, to whom, the Government or the people? Answers to these and similar questions may be found in the declaration of those who had charge of the Office from the beginning. They may be read as well in the laws which extended and governed the service. So far as the Postmasters General were concerned, most of them held the views set forth by McLean in 1829, that the aim should be service, and not revenue, but that care should be taken that, over a period, expenses and receipts should balance.¹ Charles Burrall, Osgood's first Assistant Postmaster General, expressed this idea in a letter written in 1795 in which he said: "The Post Office Establishment is not intended to raise a revenue; it is to accommodate the citizens in their private communications."² To be sure, Osgood, in 1790, recommended that a revenue be raised from the Post Office to aid in extinguishing the domestic debt; but he was evidently influenced by Hamilton, to whom, as Secretary of the Treasury, he was subordinate.³ The report of the latter upon the national finances in 1790 contained the same suggestion.

The Postmaster General [he said] gives it as his opinion that the immediate products of it [the Post Office Department] upon a proper arrangement, would probably be not less than \$100,000. And from its nature, with good management, it must be a growing, and will be likely to become a considerable fund.⁴

Later Secretaries of the Treasury, who faced somewhat easier financial problems, slowly but surely came to accept the idea that the Post Office was to be developed as a public service, not to be exploited as a source of revenue. Gallatin in 1796 noted that revenue of the Post Office was being used up for the most part in extending the service to the sparsely settled regions of the coun-

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 324.

² *Lbk, Asst. P. M. G.*, Book A, 86.

³ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 4.

⁴ *Repts. Sec'y of Treas.*, i, 27.

try.¹ An examination of the Finance Reports of the Treasury Department shows the gradual recognition of the course affairs were taking in the development of the Post Office. At first the phrase "duties on postage" was used and the receipts were entered with other taxes.² But later the expression was dropped and the postal receipts were included with other incidental revenue.³ In 1803 it was noted that "the extension of the post roads and the acceleration of the mail, while diffusing and increasing the services of the institution, have, as an object of revenue, rendered it less productive."⁴ In 1814 it was remarked that the "incidental revenues" (which included postage) were so casual and uncertain that it was difficult to estimate their yield. Only in the stress of war-times was there any attempt to raise revenue from the Office. With the return of peace, the high rates were replaced by the old low ones and the development proceeded as before. Secretaries of the Treasury ceased to regard it as a portion of their Department, a source of revenue. Rush, in 1825, gave full approval of its policies, when he said that, in expending its revenues in the extension of its services, it was performing "the highest purposes of revenue by contributing to the intercourse, trade and the prosperity of the country."⁵

Several minor matters in regard to the management of the Post Office Department are worthy of brief discussion. It is not to be expected, of course, that in business methods it measured up to modern standards; but it may fairly be judged by the prevailing standards of its day. From the start, however, it seems not to have measured up to these. The laws required but meager accounts from the Postmaster General, in whose hands lay the disposition of the entire revenue of the Department. Osgood, the first Postmaster General, recognized the dangers involved in these arrangements. A report made to the Secretary of the Treasury in 1790 said:

On the accountability of the Postmaster General, I beg leave to observe that no man can, however great his industry, however sagacious and cautious

¹ *Writings*, ed. Henry Adams, iii, 196.

² Cf. *Repts. Sec'y of Treas.*, i, 221, 252, 262, 317.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, 323. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 262. ⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, 312.

he may be in the Department, without subjecting himself to a certain loss, be answerable for the conduct of his Deputies. The calculation of loss being certain in case of Responsibility, if he has not a salary sufficient to compensate such loss, he must transact the business and keep the accounts in a manner that the Treasury shall not be able to charge him with any more money than he chooses to be charged with; or he may endeavor to transact the business fairly and hold the office until he finds he cannot preserve his reputation and credit, and then, if he is an honest man, he will resign.¹

Thus as the Office developed, the control of the Treasury, which had never been very strong, grew constantly weaker, until in McLean's administration the Post Office became definitely recognized, in fact, if not in statute law, as a separate department of Government. Various attempts were made to put a check upon the Postmaster General by requiring him to pay over all receipts from postage to the Treasury, which office should pay properly attested bills incurred in the business of the Department. This plan was rejected each time it was proposed, on the ground that it would hamper the Office too greatly. Such an arrangement would indeed have amounted to making the Post Office merely a subordinate branch of the Treasury Department. This would be perfectly proper if it were to be regarded as a source of revenue, and its expenditures regulated with reference to the state of the nation's finances in general. Since service, not revenue, was the aim, and since the Post Office was developed along definite lines without regard to any branch of finance, except its own receipts and expenditures, it was best to keep the Office independent. This need not have meant that the accounts of the Department should not be most carefully audited by the Treasury, but merely that it should be managed as an independent business concern. This could easily be done if the Treasury method of auditing were efficient, and the Department were obliged to make full and accurate reports of all the details of its management.

In looking over the operations of the Department, it is easy to point out serious faults. There was always confusion in the ac-

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 7. It is extraordinary that any officer, even the head of a great business enterprise, should have been allowed to handle money with the freedom from restraints found in the case of the Postmaster General. His independence, however, dates from 1775, when the law required him to pay the expenses of his Department and turn the balance over to the Treasury. Cf. *ante*, p. 48.

counts, and a constantly increasing balance of payments due the Department from postmasters who failed to remit the proceeds of their offices. In 1829 this amounted to \$540,000, but in this sum were included all accounts from the beginning of the Office.¹ McLean, who had succeeded in collecting over \$200,000 on this score during his term, estimated that \$300,000 should be written off as bad debts. Abraham Bradley, for a long time First Assistant Postmaster General, felt that only \$160,000 should be so classified.²

The reasons for the accumulation of such a sum are easy to see. The business of the Department extended over a vast expanse of territory and embraced many offices where the receipts were very small. By law the accounts of postmasters should have been rendered and adjusted at the end of each quarter, and suit should have been brought against all delinquents without delay. This was not always done, sometimes through neglect of the Postmaster General, sometimes because the pressure of other work kept an inadequate clerical force from making out the necessary papers, and sometimes through deliberate design. Many postmasters fell technically into default in that age when strict separation of public and private money matters was almost unknown, and most of them cleared themselves after a short period. Some, as in the case of Bache at Philadelphia, were continued in office in spite of repeated lapses, so that they might pay up without suit.³

Other difficulties were introduced by the confused state of the currency and of banking operations in distant parts of the country. The law directed the payment of postage in specie, or in notes of the Bank of the United States. Where these were not obtainable, postmasters were under strong pressure to receive notes of state banks, but the Government required that such be taken at the prevailing discount. If notes accepted by a postmaster depreciated while in his hands the loss fell upon him, not upon the Department.⁴ Custom from the earliest times had decreed that credit should be given on postage and most post-

¹ *A. S. P., P. O.*, 215.

² *Ibid.*, 334.

³ *Ibid.*, 334, 335.

⁴ Lbk, Book A, 1821-1822, 48; 1823-1824, 11; Book C, 1827-1828, 107.

masters were willing to extend it. The Department, however, very properly insisted that this transaction was entirely at the postmaster's risk, and charged each deputy with the amount of postage accrued at his office. One exasperated postmaster, who attempted to secure payment of a bill for back postage by withholding letters for which payment was offered, was reprimanded by the Department and reminded that he had no right to interfere with the delivery of the mails in the collection of a debt due to himself.¹ Undue extension of credit for postage was undoubtedly responsible for many small defalcations.

The undeveloped condition of banking facilities in different parts of the country, together with the dangers which attended the transmission of money by mail, early led the Department to avoid this wherever possible. Remittances were made in other forms than bank notes, but the safest plan was to pay contractors for their services by drafts on postmasters on the routes they served. After some experience with a deposit of funds in the Bank of the United States and other banks in the larger cities, McLean put into operation in 1823 a system whereby all accounts, except the largest, were to be settled by drafts. This was safer, but it increased somewhat the chance of error in the handling of so many accounts. The losses in the transmission of money had been about a thousand dollars a year. In 1829 Barry declared the total loss from this cause since the foundation of the Department had been \$17,000.² In 1832 a system was devised whereby all postmasters deposited their funds, making their returns to the Post Office in the form of certificates of deposit in the various banks. Those in the smallest offices deposited each quarter, and those in the larger offices made their deposits monthly or weekly according to the size of the office.³

One serious fault with the system employed in making payments was the length of time involved in getting receipts returned after payments had been made. Meigs reported in 1819 that it had not been found possible to get them all within two or even three years after the payments had been made.⁴ This became

¹ Lbk, Book W, 1829, 3; cf. Book E, 1823, 468; Book I, 1825-1826, 34.

² *A. S. P., P. O.*, 215.

³ *Ibid.*, 345, 346.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

particularly serious, since the practice in making up accounts was not to charge any payment until the receipt was returned. Drafts were, of course, noted when sent out, but final entry was deferred until the signed receipt had come back to the Department. A similar practice was observed with regard to payments made for service rendered by a contractor prior to the return of his contract and bond, filled out according to law. Failure to charge these payments made the statements of the condition of the Department practically worthless, as Barry discovered to his dismay in 1833.¹

Any looseness in the Post-Office accounting should have been checked by the Treasury auditors, but was not. These officers had at their disposal the contracts made by the Postmaster General for mail transportation, since the law required these to be deposited with the Comptroller of the Treasury. These original records were never used in auditing payments made in accordance with them. Instead, the Postmaster General was given credit for all payments for which receipts could be shown, whether or not their amounts were in excess of the contract price. Even after directions had been given in 1822 to use contracts as vouchers, payments were passed to the credit of the Office even when they were in excess of the amount specified in the contract.² In some cases the sums may have been earned by reason of increased speed or facilities provided by the contractors, but this fact should certainly have been noted on the contract before the payments were allowed by the Treasury.

So far as can be ascertained, the financial arrangements of the Department should have allowed it to run its business without loss and about as efficiently as private business was then conducted. It kept, indeed, three books fundamental to a good accounting, namely, day-book, journal, and ledger. There were also the necessary cash-books, bank-books, etc.; but in spite of all these, the accounts were usually hopelessly confused. This arose because, so far as can be determined from the books now preserved, accounts were regularly kept with persons only, and there is no evidence to be found of proper internal accounts. No separate

¹ *Cong. Deb.*, x, Appendix, 57 ff.

² *A. S. P.*, P. O., 94, 95.

account was kept of salaries until after 1829, though these were paid out of a special appropriation, not from postal revenue. As a matter of fact, McLean's practice was to pay his clerks monthly out of the funds on hand, and then get a Treasury warrant at the end of each quarter for the amount advanced. Barry remedied this by opening a separate account with the Treasury for salaries and other expenses paid from appropriation.

Another glaring fault was the failure to take a balance at such times and in such form as to reveal the true condition of the Department. Previous to the time when McLean began his annual reports to President Monroe, balances were taken at irregular intervals; and even when regular reports began to be made, the statements furnished were brief and lacking in details. No attempt was made, for example, to calculate expenditures and receipts by states or even by sections of the country, though such division had early been made for the purpose of making mail contracts.

Such looseness in handling the money of the Office could hardly fail to be disastrous. Several times Postmasters General took note of this fact in official communications. McLean said in 1831, after he had left the Office:

The responsibility of Postmaster General is similar to that of a paymaster in the Army, who disburses a large amount of money annually. He is charged at the Treasury with the sum paid to him and for which he can only obtain a credit by exhibiting proper vouchers. The security of the Government consists mainly in the integrity of this officer and his obligation to account annually to the Treasury. His safety may depend on the accuracy and integrity of the disbursing agents he employs.¹

For many years the heavy burden of financial responsibility rested on the shoulders of Abraham Bradley, First Assistant Postmaster General. His term of service began as a clerk in 1799 and ended with his summary removal by Barry in September, 1829. He was the man who gave continuity to the workings of the Office, and he seems to have been honest and faithful, if unprogressive in his methods.² He was under fire on various occasions, but was

¹ Letter to Senate committee of investigation, Feb. 26, 1831; *A. S. P., P. O.*, 325.

² McLean said that his conduct in money matters was above reproach, but that, "having been long in the department and conversant with its details, he felt a strong

never convicted of any fault. In 1816 he was accused of having sold drafts and bank notes at a premium, and of having applied the proceeds of this transaction with public money to his own private benefit. Though he was at the time president of the Union Bank of Georgetown, a Congressional Committee could find no evidence of any abuse of his public office.¹ Yet even this faithful officer was at times a defaulter. He told an investigating committee in 1831 that he had twice fallen behind in his accounts and had each time cleared himself, his debt to the Office having been in one instance \$3000 and in the other \$5000.² If so capable and cautious a man could become confused in his accounts, surely it is not surprising that others also fell into error.

The really vital problem of Post-Office finance remains yet untouched, the problem of revenue and expenditures. Before entering upon an examination of the statistics, some comments must be made on the accounting methods of the Department. Mention has already been made of the irregular and fragmentary statements of financial conditions made by the various Postmasters General. On the revenue side these included only receipts from postage. It should be remembered that since 1799 the Office had received money from another source, namely, from appropriations made by Congress out of the general Treasury of the United States. These have always been authorized to meet certain definite expenses, and so there is a reason for excluding them from the statement of income. But the accounts are open to another and more serious criticism. They fail to show the real burden of expenditure entailed by the running of this Department, since the only expenses reported are what may be termed "operating expenses," including, besides commissions to postmasters, only payments to contractors for mail transportation and the incidental expenses of the service. The sums paid for salaries and for the other items met out of appropriations are not included.³

Though this practice has official sanction, it must be condemned preference for rules which he had long been accustomed to observe and was generally averse to changes." *A. S. P., P. O.*, 324.

¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

² *Ibid.*, 334.

³ Reference has already been made to the distinction between the two classes of expenditures. See *ante*, p. 116.

as seriously misleading. There is no reason why administrative expenses, for such these payments really were, should not be taken into account. The expenses of a business include all it spends in carrying on any of its activities. If it be objected that the two classes of expenditure are different in character, the reply is obvious. If the commissions of the deputy postmasters are included, why should the salary of the Postmaster General be left out? Still it may be urged that, if these expenses be included, then the appropriations from which they were met should be added on the income side. Such a course would, however, tend to obscure the real relation which the Post Office bears to the people. From their point of view it is a burden, in that, as a department of the Government, its administrative expenses are paid out of the general Treasury, and a further burden, in that it pays postmasters' commissions, etc., from funds raised by charges on correspondence. Considered in this light all expenses must be included, and only that income recognized which comes from postal receipts. It is this fund which will be meant when the term gross revenue is used in this study. Consistently, nothing can be recognized as net revenue unless it represents a clear excess above all expenses, both of operation and of administration.

In the first five years of the Office the gross revenue averaged \$77,075, and the average between 1795 and 1799 was \$213,501, an increase of 177 per cent. Subsequent periods show an increase in receipts, but the rates vary greatly, ranging from 71 per cent in 1815-1819 to 3 per cent in the five years following that. The average rate of increase for each period as compared with the one immediately preceding it was 60 per cent.¹ The total first reached \$100,000 in 1793 and \$200,000 in 1797, while the half-million mark was attained in 1809 and the million in 1815, when the double rates imposed during the war were in operation. The first normal year to see \$1,000,000 of receipts was 1817, and the total never again fell below that sum. Until 1825 the figures varied from \$56,000 to \$200,000 above the million mark, rising in that year to \$1,306,000 and increasing at a rapid rate thereafter. The year 1827 saw the attainment of one million and a half, and the

¹ See Table IV, Appendix C.

three quarters came two years later, followed by two millions in 1832.¹

According to the Post-Office method of accounting, the return of "total expenditures" includes three items: Commissions to postmasters, transportation of the mails, and incidental expenses. The last classification does not include either the expenses of the General Post Office or those of the local offices. It stands for expenses for mail-bags, locks, wrapping paper, twine, advertising mail contracts, etc. One of these items, commissions to postmasters, has always been outside the power of the Postmaster General. Congress fixed the maximum percentage of receipts which might be allowed, and the small size of the returns compelled the payment of these sums. So also, as has been remarked, the amount paid for mail transportation was largely controlled by the acts of Congress establishing the post roads. The head of the Office had, indeed, the power to decide what sort of transportation should be given on each route, whether by rider or by stage-coach, and also with what frequency the mails should be sent; but even so, he had little opportunity to show his skill in bargaining. Of course the difference between careful and extravagant contracts for mail transportation might easily account for the difference between surplus and deficit in a given period, as appears to have been the case once or twice in the first forty years of the Office. As the postal service was constantly pushed out to the very frontiers of settlement, and no hesitation was shown in sending the mail through the wilderness to reach distant towns, the result was that most of the newer routes were always burdensome to the establishment. Under these conditions it is difficult to condemn a Postmaster General even for recurring deficits. A further fact, which should also be considered in this connection, is that the revenue of the Office was not only variable but also completely out of the control of the Department, since Congress fixed the rates of postage.

The total expenditures, including both operating and administrative, of the Post Office averaged \$60,198 per year during the first five years of its existence, but the next period saw an increase

¹ See Table III, Appendix C.

of 161 per cent. As the number of post offices increased 174 per cent and the length of the post roads 97 per cent, it will be seen that the strictest economy was being practised. The figures for expenditure had reached \$150,000 in 1797, and thereafter increased rapidly: \$250,000 was reached in 1801 and the half-million mark in 1809, though the total had been within \$10,000 of that figure for two or three years before that date. The average of the period 1810-1814 was \$606,742, and in the next five years it increased 57 per cent to \$955,171, the actual figures having twice exceeded \$1,000,000 in that time. Once the latter figure had been attained, the totals never fell below it, though they did not increase at so rapid a rate as in the preceding years. Though several times closely approached, the two-million mark was not reached until 1832. The figures for 1829 represent an increase of sixty-fold over those of 1790. The average rate of increase in each five-year period as compared with the period immediately preceding was 66.8 per cent.¹

In the earliest years Congress made no appropriations for the Post Office. It apparently paid all its own expenses, including those of the General Post Office, or central bureau, at the seat of government. Only once before 1800 was money appropriated, and then only \$10,950, for salaries of the Postmaster General and Assistant, clerk hire, and incidentals like rent, firewood, and candles. Thereafter the same expenses continued to be provided by appropriation, and the slow growth of this indicates the tardy expansion of the Office force. Between 1800 and 1804, when gross receipts increased 56 per cent, the number of post offices 144 per cent, and the length of post roads 64 per cent, appropriations increased but 25 per cent.² From 1800 to 1829 the totals increased about five-fold only, rising from \$10,000 to \$63,000.

When we turn to a consideration of the net revenue of the Post Office, the importance of reckoning in the expenses of administration becomes evident at once. According to the Department's figures, six out of the eight five-year periods between 1790 and 1829 show some surplus above operating expenses, the percentage of net to gross revenue ranging from 28.2 in 1795-1799 to 1.1 in

¹ See Tables III and IV, Appendix C.

² See Table VIII, Appendix C.

1825-1829. For the whole forty years the surplus equals 9.9 per cent of the gross receipts.¹ If, on the other hand, we charge the Office with administrative expenses, one more deficit appears, and the highest percentage of surplus is decreased to 27.2 in 1795-1799, while the net revenue for the entire period becomes equal to 7.4 per cent of the postage accrued. Following the latter method of accounting, it is to be noted that net revenue increased more rapidly than gross in the first years of the Office.² This resulted from a rapid multiplication of post offices, coupled with a slower development of post roads and, in general, a careful management of the Department. In the period between 1795 and 1799 payments for mail transportation decreased from \$7.03, the figure of the earlier period, to \$6.17 per mile of authorized road; while the expenditures for this purpose fell from 62.7 to 60.4 per cent of the operating expenditures of the Office.³

The decade after 1800 saw a decline in net revenue, at first gradual, but later rapid, culminating in an average yield of but \$3,764 in the years 1805-1809. Then followed a rise, when for ten years gross receipts increased faster than the extension of post offices and roads caused expenditures to rise. The period 1815-1819 saw an annual surplus of \$113,387; but it must be remembered that this includes part of the war period, when increased rates prevailed.⁴ The average gross yield per mile of post road, which had fallen as low as \$12.70 per year in the period 1805-1809, rose to \$15.70 in 1810-1814 and to \$19.21 in 1815-1819.⁵ The cost of transportation rose, also, but not in any such degree. From \$8.65 per mile in 1805-1809, it increased to \$9.51 in the next period; and under the soothing influence of the prosperity of the Office was allowed to reach \$10.90 — the highest point in the forty years under view — in 1815-1819.⁶

Such extravagance, for so the succeeding figures would show it to have been, could mean nothing but disaster and deficits to the Office, when it faced the hard conditions of the next ten years. Post offices and post roads were established at a rapid rate, while

¹ See Table V, Appendix C.

² See Table III, Appendix C.

³ See Tables XII and IX, Appendix C.

⁴ See Table IV, Appendix C.

⁵ See Table XII, Appendix C.

⁶ *Ibid.*

gross receipts remained practically stationary.¹ The result was an increase of 26 per cent in the total expenditures and an average deficit of \$48,497 in the years 1820-1824. In part this may be attributed to McLean's often-expressed purpose to use up the "surplus of previous years." The next five years saw some improvement in the condition of the Office, its own figures showing a small annual surplus, \$14,547.² Upon proper accounting, it is found that the deficit in 1820-1824 becomes \$94,275 per year, and that the small surplus of the following years is turned into an actual deficit of \$33,306 per year.³

One more point in the financial operations of the Post Office remains to be considered, namely, the disposal of the surplus revenue. By law it was to be paid into the Treasury at stated periods, but as a matter of fact payments were made so irregularly that the account of money paid over bore little relation to the current operations of the Department. This arose partly from the manner in which the Post Office reported its gross receipts. As has been noted already, the figures given represented all the postage accrued at the various offices during the given period, not the amounts collected by the deputies and forwarded to the Department. Many remittances were late in coming in, and many times the money was deposited in banks against the immediate needs of the Office. Sometimes also simple neglect caused the payments to the Treasury to be delayed. For these reasons the table showing the average annual payments to the Treasury shows great variations from the book-surplus or net revenue as reported by the Department. Thus, in 1790-1794, the surplus was 25 per cent of the gross receipts, but only two fifths of it was paid over.⁴ In the next five years a somewhat better showing was made, for 22.5 per cent out of 28.2 per cent net revenue found its way to the Treasury. In the years 1800-1804 payments amounted to 20 per cent, though the net revenue of the particular period was only 15 per cent of the gross receipts. Even in periods when the Office was running behind, some payments were made to the Treasury, as in 1805-1809, when, with a deficit of 4 per cent per year, 3.1 per cent of the gross

¹ See Table III, Appendix C.

² *Ibid.*

³ See Table IV, Appendix C.

⁴ See Table XI, Appendix C.

receipts was paid over. Clearly such payments formed no indication of the current state of the Department. The highest percentage of current gross revenue paid was 22.5 per cent in 1795-1799, and the lowest .01 per cent in 1824-1829, the average for the forty years amounting to 8.2 per cent.¹ In other words, the Treasury actually got a little less than eight ninths of the sum which appeared on the Post Office books as net revenue. Or, to put it still another way, of all the money which became due on account of postage, about 98.3 per cent was collected and disposed of in the regular ways, either being paid out for running expenses or turned over to the Treasury as surplus. The remaining 1.7 per cent represents losses in collection. In view of the faulty business methods of the Office it is surprising that the sum was not larger. It seems as if the combined effects of extending credit for postage, transmission of currency through the mails, and the general loose habits of handling money common in those days might have been even worse than they proved. Between 1793 (the earliest date for which there is any record of payments) and 1829 the total sum paid into the Treasury was \$943,022. It is worthy of note that this exceeds by about \$57,000 the total sum appropriated by Congress between 1799 and 1829.² In other words, the Post Office was almost exactly self-supporting, when both operating and administrative expenses are taken into account.

¹ See Table XI, Appendix C.

² See Tables X and VI, Appendix C.

CHAPTER X

POSTAL POLICIES, 1639-1829

It may seem difficult to find any thread of connection between the earliest postal arrangements made in this country and the developed system of the nineteenth century. The task, however, becomes simpler if it is borne in mind that we have passed through the usual stages in the growth of our postal system, and that its history, even from the early beginnings, is as continuous as that of any other Post Office. It would, therefore, be idle to remark that a great part of the process has been accomplished without any far-reaching plan, by the simple method of meeting each new condition as it arose, and modifying the existing institution to meet the new need. If account be taken of the earliest attempts to secure transmission of letters, it will be seen that the aim was to facilitate official correspondence, not that of private individuals.¹ In this the colonists were unwittingly following in the steps of Rome and of practically all the nations that have built up their postal services during a long period of time.

Posts for public service only, and under the auspices of colonial governors, were unsatisfactory, and the really continuous history of the Office begins with the setting-up of a private monopoly under Neale's patent in 1692. This establishment may be dismissed with slight consideration, since it never had any great promise of success from a financial point of view. The country was undeveloped, and, in consideration of the small possibilities of communication, the rates were too high to be attractive. The result was bankruptcy for the proprietor and the transfer of the office to the British Government, under whose management no greater success was achieved.

Revenue was still sought, but in vain, for the conditions of the colonies were not yet such as to make profit possible. Rates of

¹ Reference is here made to the Virginia law of 1661 and Lovelace's attempt to set up postal service between New York and New England in 1673. The Massachusetts resolve of 1639 concerned only collection of letters. Cf. *ante*, pp. 5, 6.

postage were kept high without producing the desired returns. The only noteworthy improvement introduced during the period was brought about when the colonial Office was linked to the rest of the British system in 1711. From that time until 1753 the management was in the hands of unskilful men; but by the time of Franklin the country had so developed that his energy in making the few needed changes brought about the first surpluses in the history of the Post Office. It is not proper, however, to give all the credit for the change to Franklin and his associates. They were men of wisdom, and, best of all, of experience in postal affairs, but they had other marked advantages over their predecessors. The Act of Parliament in 1765 lowered rates at a time when the expanding population of the colonies demanded increased facilities of communication. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that these men were the first to put into practice the fundamental principle of any public-service industry — making their service desirable to the people. They made it certain, safe, and, considering the times, speedy. Their reward was found in a greatly increased volume of mail, which made the Office a source of revenue to the British Treasury. /

The period of the Revolution showed the Office in war-time, with all the special problems that arose from the abnormal conditions. It was necessary that the colonists should take over the postal service and control it, to protect their means of communication with each other. The natural attempt was made to secure revenue from its operations, but the disturbed state of the country would have made that impossible, even if the British army had not controlled large portions of the territory that would normally have been most profitable. Repeated increases in rates, though in harmony with the best theories of the time, did not help the revenue, and all thought of service to the general public seems to have disappeared. All that was attempted was to keep up such a service as was required by the needs of Congress and of the army.

Peace brought more favorable conditions for postal development, and a rapid increase in receipts resulted. Another experienced man, Hazard, came to the control of affairs, and much of

the improvement to be noted between 1782 and 1790 was due to his efforts. He was the father of the notable Ordinance of 1782, the basic law of the Post Office for ten years. In improved conditions of transportation and of service this Postmaster General made many changes for the better. In those days the influence of the head of the institution was direct, and his experience counted for more than at the present time. It was fortunate, therefore, that at this critical period in its development the Post Office had a strong man directing its operations.

The first years after the adoption of the Constitution were taken up with experiments and with the adjustment of many problems as to the organization and policy of the Office. Especially the relations of the Department to the legislative and executive branches of the Government had to be worked out. Two policies appeared quite clearly in those early days. On the one hand the fiscal tradition of the post as a source of revenue still prevailed, and on the other the idea of rapid extension of service to the public was also in men's minds. The results of the conflict between these two ideas may be seen in the discussions and laws of the time. The Post Office was subordinated to the Treasury Department and every endeavor was made to increase its receipts; but at the same time Congress extended the benefits of the Office to remote parts of the country at a rapid pace, and gave specially favorable rates for letters going long distances. As time passed, however, the policy of service came to be dominant over the desire for revenue. It is difficult to say just when the balance shifted, but the change can be traced in a long series of laws. Especially after 1820, its results can be seen in the rapid expansion of post roads, the decline in net revenue, and the changed attitude of the Treasury officials toward postal receipts.

After 1825, the transformation of the Post Office from a branch of the revenue system to a full-fledged, independent Department of the Government was complete, and its results were notable. The change was manifested in such small things as the heading of its papers and in the making of independent reports to the President. The sturdy McLean had established and maintained his freedom from the control of the Treasury. He had asserted boldly

that the Post Office had a right to use for its own purposes the surplus of one year to meet the needs of another, thus reaffirming a principle to be found in the early laws of the pre-Constitution days. In this position he had gradually obtained the support of the Secretaries of the Treasury, who about 1825 admitted that he was acting within his legal powers when he spent all the receipts from postage in extending the service. As the independence of the Office became more complete the question of the admission of the Postmaster General to the Cabinet came to the fore. It is true that political considerations, especially a desire to manipulate the patronage of the Office, weighed heavily with Jackson in taking the step. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the Post Office had indeed ceased to be an appendage of the Treasury and had developed an organization and a policy of its own.

By 1825 there had been established what may be called the traditional American policy with regard to the Post Office. Instead of seeking a surplus from its operation to swell the general funds of the Government, the heads of the Office spent their energies in the attempt to extend its scope so as to serve the most remote communities in the land. Yet there was no intention of doing this without regard to receipts, for it appears that in the forty years under consideration the total revenue exceeded all expenditures, even those of administration, by \$655,686.¹ The period chosen is, of course, arbitrary, and an even more favorable showing for the Post Office could be made out by choosing another date for the end of the study; yet the result indicates that McLean had certainly adhered to his announced policy of making the service self-supporting over a long period of years. The numerous annual deficits after 1820 did not use up the whole "surplus" created in the earlier years until after 1829. There can be no question, on the other hand, as to the extension of the post roads to every corner of the nation, thus diffusing the benefits of the service among a great number of citizens.

A detailed criticism of postal rates leads, in the main, to ap-

¹ In making this calculation the Office is charged with all sums appropriated to its services by Congress. It therefore accurately represents the real state of the financial operations of the Department.

proval of the policy followed. If the charges for long distances were lower in proportion than those for short, it should be borne in mind that the cost of handling letters does not increase with the distance, and that these rates were probably just. It is further probable that higher rates would have seriously reduced the amount of such correspondence, and hence would have diminished rather than increased the postal receipts. The lowest rates were always too high, and the Office would have profited by their reduction. The result of the increase in charges during the War of 1812 goes to support this view. All rates were then increased 50 per cent, yet the gross receipts increased only from \$730,730 in 1814 to \$1,043,065 in 1815. The disturbed state of the nation would offer a partial explanation, but the high rates were clearly excessive. Ample proof of this is furnished by the fact that, after the restoration of the old rates, it took but three years for the gross receipts to equal the highest sum produced by the war rates.

The fact that when the emergency of war had passed the old postal rates were restored is a clear indication of the policy followed by Congress at this period. An indirect tax, easy of collection and sure to yield a considerable revenue, was deliberately abandoned in order to allow the Post Office to expand to the fullest its capacity for service. From the discussions in Congress at the time, it is evident that social, rather than fiscal, considerations determined this action. Here again is striking evidence of the policy of the Department.

Exception might be taken, from the point of view of modern postal practice, to the use of the "zone system" of rates; but at that time no nation had yet adopted the flat-rate system now in use. Special treatment for newspapers and magazines was characteristic of the rates; but this is always necessary, since matter of this sort will not come to the office at all if the charges are high. Financial wisdom, then, as well as considerations of social and political advantage, dictated this policy. The service of the Post Office in the development of the newspaper and periodical press in this country has been great, but the real financial burden is hard to estimate. There are some indications that we have here to do with a case of what the economists call "joint products,"

since newspapers were carried by mails already provided to transport letters. In this view anything which could be obtained for the newspapers would act to reduce the cost of sending letters, so that there would be no burden put upon letter-writers. In case, however, that the weight of papers forced the contractors to provide additional facilities for transportation beyond those needed for letters, there was a burden created. Since the newspapers have always furnished a large share of the bulk of the mails and brought in only a small fraction of the receipts, it may be that a part, at least, of the advantage derived by the newspaper subscriber in the low price of his journal has been paid for by the writer of letters.

Far more serious, however, than any criticism of postal rates or policies regarding the extension of post roads is the indictment of the Post Office for failure to keep proper accounts. The first specific charge, already discussed at length, is the failure to consider administrative expenditures. As a result of this, the statements of the Postmasters General never accurately represented the true condition of the finances, always understating the burden of cost to the people. It is true, of course, that considering the whole period from 1790 to 1829, the gross receipts exceeded all expenditures; but the actual net revenue was much less than the sum shown by the Post Office books. The sums actually paid into the Treasury at various times between 1793 and 1829 exceeded the total of the amounts appropriated by Congress for the administrative expenses of the Department by \$56,901, but this was the result of the circumstances of the postal operations, not of any design on the part of the Postmasters General. The small amount represents slightly less than one year's appropriations at about 1829.

Down to 1799 the organic law of the Post Office Department directed that the salaries of the few officers and clerks be met out of postal receipts; but in that year a change was made, and the general appropriation bill provided for the payment of the administrative expenses of the Office out of the ordinary funds of the Government. The burden was thus transferred from a specific industrial revenue to the general tax revenue. The transfer may be defended on grounds of social utility, but there is no reason

why the accounts after 1799 should have disregarded those items of expenditure which had previously been included.¹

The second count in the indictment is that the Post-Office accounts never accurately represented the state of the finances, through faulty methods of entering receipts and expenditures. In statements of revenue the basis was always the amount accrued, not the sum actually paid in by the deputy postmasters. The result of this system was to overstate the resources of the Office. The discrepancy between the real and nominal income of the Department amounted to \$541,680 in 1829.² On the side of expenditures, also, the accounts never represented the true state of affairs. The Post Office was accustomed to make payments to mail contractors and other persons with whom it had dealings as soon as they became due, regardless of whether the legal requirements had been met in all cases. Thus sums were paid out for carrying the mails before the contractors had returned to the Office all the documents required by law. The accounts, on the other hand, included only sums which had been paid out in strict compliance with all legal directions, since only in such form could they be passed by the Treasury auditors. In making reports, then, the Postmasters General always misstated the resources and disbursements of the Office, making the former too great and the latter too small. It is evident, however, that accurate accounts may be kept if receipts are taken on the basis of accruals and payments made on the basis of conformity to all requirements of law. Where the actual transactions differ from those indicated in the accounts, there should be some means taken to reveal the fact. The Post-Office accounts were never brought into accord with the realities.

It would be gratuitous to point out that the Post Office could have made a better showing from the business and financial points

¹ For an early account of the Post Office, including the administrative expenditures, see *A. S. P., P. O.*, 14. Even there they are set apart from the operating expenses, but their inclusion is significant. The fact that most of the accounts of the Post Office which have been published fail to contain these items is to be explained in part by the fact that they were made at periods subsequent to 1799, when the distinction established by law had been followed by a change in the accounting practice of the Department.

² *Ibid.*, 215.

of view, at least, if it could have been kept out of politics. Such a consummation seems to have been entirely out of reach, no matter how devoutly it might be wished by outside observers. The immense patronage of the Office caused the shadows of partisanship to hang over it from the days of Jefferson onward. Only McLean among the Postmasters General seems to have been able to stand against the tide, and even he was forced out of office at last by the clamor of the hungry Jacksonians for spoils in the postal service.

In summing up the development of the Post Office in the first forty years after the adoption of the Constitution, it may be said that during this period there grew up a policy which came to be accepted as the traditional American policy for the Office. The aim was service rather than revenue, and to this end the receipts were put back into the extension of roads to all parts of the country. For the period when the country was young and rapidly growing, the policy was undoubtedly of immense value to the nation. Above all, it serves to emphasize the fact, often neglected in discussion concerning the Post Office, that this important activity of Government is more than a mere fiscal device, or even a vast industrial enterprise. It is a social force of great magnitude.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE POSTMASTERS GENERAL

1. SAMUEL OSGOOD. — Nominated September 25, 1789; confirmed and commissioned September 26, 1789; resigned July 11, 1791, and served to August 19, 1791.

Born, Andover, Mass., 1748. Graduated at Harvard, 1770; studied theology, but became a merchant. Captain in army and member of Massachusetts Board of War, 1775-1776. Delegate to Continental Congress, 1780-1784. First Commissioner of the Treasury, 1785-1789. Supervisor of New York, 1801-1803. Naval officer at New York, 1803-1813. Died, New York, 1813.

2. TIMOTHY PICKERING. — Commissioned, during recess of Senate, August 12, 1791; entered on his duties August 19, 1791; nominated October 31, 1791; confirmed and recommissioned November 7, 1791; recommissioned, under law of May 8, 1794, during recess of Senate, June 1, 1794; nominated December 10, 1794; confirmed and recommissioned December 11, 1794; commissioned Secretary of War, January 2, 1795.

Born, Salem, Mass., 1745. Graduated at Harvard, 1763; admitted to the bar, 1768. Lieutenant in militia, 1766; colonel, 1775. Representative in Massachusetts General Court, 1776; Quartermaster General, 1780-1785; settled in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, 1785; Member Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, 1789; agent of Government in Indian negotiations, 1791; Secretary of War, 1795; Secretary of State, 1795-1800; U. S. Senator, 1803. Died, Boston, 1829.

3. JOSEPH HABERSHAM. — Nominated February 24, 1795; confirmed and commissioned February 25, 1795; resigned and served to November 2, 1801.

Born, Savannah, Ga., 1751. Prominent as member of Georgia Committee of Safety; Delegate to Congress, 1785-1786; President of Savannah branch, Bank of the United States, 1802. Died, Savannah, 1815.

4. GIDEON GRANGER. — Commissioned, during recess of Senate, November 2, 1801; entered on duties, November 2, 1801; nominated January 6, 1802; confirmed and recommissioned January 26, 1802; resigned February 25, 1814.

Born, Suffield, Conn., 1767. Graduated at Yale, 1787; lawyer. After resigning office of Postmaster General lived in New York State, where he was associated with DeWitt Clinton in movements for internal improvements. Died, 1832.

5. RETURN JONATHAN MEIGS, JR. — Nominated February 25, 1814; confirmed and commissioned March 17, 1814; entered on duties April 11, 1814; resigned, and served to June 30, 1823.

Born, Middletown, Conn., 1766. Graduated at Yale, 1786; moved with family to Marietta, Ohio, 1788; practiced law; Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio, 1802; Judge of United States District Court for Michigan Territory, 1807-1808; Governor of Ohio, 1810-1814. Died, 1825.

6. JOHN MCLEAN. — Commissioned, during recess of Senate, June 26, 1823; entered on duties July 1, 1823; nominated December 5, 1823; confirmed and recommissioned December 9, 1823; appointed to United States Supreme Court, March 7, 1829.

Born, Morris County, New Jersey, 1785, son of a poor farmer; lived with family in Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio; studied law in Cincinnati, 1803-1807; admitted to bar, 1807. Member of Congress, 1812; Justice of Supreme Court of Ohio, 1816; Justice of United States Supreme Court, 1829-1861. Died, 1861.

7. WILLIAM TAYLOR BARRY. — Nominated, confirmed and commissioned March 9, 1829; entered on duties April 6, 1829; appointed Minister to Spain, April 10, 1835; served to April 30, 1835.

Born, Lunenburg, Va., 1785. Graduated at William and Mary College, 1807; studied law; admitted to bar and practiced in Lexington, Kentucky. Appointed to fill unexpired term in United States Senate, 1815; Judge of Supreme Court of Kentucky, 1816; appointed Minister to Spain, but died on way to his post, 1835.

Sources: Mosher, *Executive Register*; Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*; besides biographies of individuals.

APPENDIX B

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. SOURCE MATERIALS

1. UNITED STATES RECORDS

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- American State Papers, Finance*. Washington, 1832-1861. (A. S. P., Fin.)
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- Reports of the Secretary of the Treasury* (1790-1828). Washington, 1828-1829. (Repts. Sec'y of Treas.)
- Statutes at Large of the United States*. Boston and Washington, 1850-. (Stat.)

The following are the most important official records of the Post Office Department:

- Annals of the Post Office Department*. MS. 13 pp. in MS. Division, Library of Congress. Date appears to be about 1837.
- Letter Books of the Postmaster General*. MSS. in Post Office Department. (Lbk.)

The set is practically complete from 1789 to date. On many points connected with the development of the postal service this has been the leading source of information.

List of the Post Offices in the United States. Washington, 1803, and many later editions. Published by the Postmaster General.

"Miscellaneous Post Office Papers."

Several bundles of MSS. so labelled have been deposited in the MS. Division, Library of Congress. For the most part the papers are of little value.

Postal Laws and Regulations. (P. L. & R.)

Official publication by the Postmaster General, 1798, and many subsequent editions at irregular intervals. Useful for the detailed instructions to postmasters and official interpretations of points of law.

Reports of the Postmaster General. Annually since 1823.

Route Registers. MSS.

Contain lists of post routes and their histories. Only a few are to be found pertaining to the period studied.

2. COLONIAL RECORDS

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Calendar of State Papers. (Cal. S. P.)

Calendar of Treasury Papers, and Treasury Books and Papers. London, 1868-1903. (Cal. T. P.)

Colonial Series: America and West Indies. London, 1860-1910. (Col. Ser.)

3. PAPERS OF PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Among manuscripts the following should be mentioned as having been used:

Franklin Papers, in the collections of the Library of Congress, the University of Pennsylvania, and the American Philosophical Society, of Philadelphia. (F. P.)

Granger Papers. The MS. Division of the Library of Congress has some papers of Gideon Granger, fourth Postmaster General of the United States.

McLean Papers. Much valuable material is found in the papers of John McLean, preserved in the MS. Division of the Library of Congress. (McL. P.)

Madison Papers. MS. Division, Library of Congress.

Pickering Papers. The MS. Division of the Library of Congress has some papers of the second Postmaster General.

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APPENDIX C

TABLES

- I. Growth of the Post Office Department.
- II. Same, annual averages for five-year periods.
- III. Receipts and expenditures.
- IV. Average annual receipts and expenditures.
- V. Expenditures and net revenue in terms of gross receipts.
- VI. Appropriations for the Post Office Department.
- VII. Analysis of expenditure.
- VIII. Same, average annual expenditure for certain purposes.
- IX. Same, percentage of total spent for certain purposes.
- X. Payments into the Treasury.
- XI. Same, compared with net revenue.
- XII. Gross receipts and payments for mail transportation per mile of post road.

TABLE I

GROWTH OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

Showing number of letters carried, number of post offices, and length of post roads in miles, 1790-1829

Years	Post offices	Miles of post roads	Letters carried
1790	75	1,875	265,545
1791	89	1,903	324,058
1792	195	5,642	472,108
1793	209	5,642	733,224
1794	450	11,984	902,624
1795	453	13,207	1,124,340
1796	468	13,207	1,365,469
1797	554	16,180	1,497,986
1798	639	16,180	1,630,839
1799	677	16,180	1,853,922
1800	903	20,817	1,965,628
1801	1,025	22,307	2,243,104
1802	1,114	25,315	2,289,315
1803	1,258	25,315	2,482,761
1804	1,405	29,556	2,726,150
1805	1,558	31,076	2,949,651
1806	1,710	33,431	3,122,742
1807	1,848	33,755	3,351,341
1808	1,944	34,035	3,223,948
1809	2,012	34,035	3,546,439
1810	2,300	36,406	3,861,788
1811	2,403	36,406	4,110,729
1812	2,610	39,378	4,554,456

Years	Post offices	Miles of post roads	Letters carried
1813 .....	...	39,450	4,922,085
1814 .....	...	41,736	5,112,590
1815	3,000	43,966	7,301,455
1816	3,260	48,976	6,732,474
1817	3,459	52,689	8,023,784
1818	3,618	59,473	9,041,880
1819	4,000	68,586	9,631,896
1820	4,500	73,492	8,895,415
1821	4,650	78,808	8,453,264
1822	4,799	82,763	8,939,920
1823	5,043	84,860	8,914,760
1824	5,182	84,860	9,254,496
1825	5,677	94,052	10,016,488
1826	6,150	94,052	11,110,336
1827	7,003	105,336	11,788,408
1828	7,651	114,536	12,785,072
1829	8,050	114,780	13,659,344

The figures for the number of offices and the length of the post roads are taken from official statements by the Post Office Department. The figures with regard to letters carried are taken from the estimate in "Miles's Postal Reform," 26, 27.

TABLE II

GROWTH OF THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

Annual averages for five-year periods

Period	Post offices	Miles of post roads	Letters carried
1790-1794	203	5,001	539,513
1795-1799	558	14,990	1,494,351
1800-1804	1,141	24,622	2,337,396
1805-1809	1,814	33,270	3,242,823
1810-1814	2,437	39,763	4,512,329
1815-1819	3,447	54,738	8,147,477
1820-1824	4,834	80,956	8,865,531
1825-1829	6,906	104,521	11,902,849

Increase in each period over the preceding one

Period	Post offices	Miles of post roads	Letters carried
1795-1799	174 %	97 %	177 %
1800-1804	144	64	56
1805-1809	58	35	38
1810-1814	34	19	39
1815-1819	41	37	80
1820-1824	40	47	8
1825-1829	42	29	34

TABLE III
RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES. 1789-1829

Year	Revenue from postage	Total expenditures	Net revenue
1789 ¹	\$7,526	\$7,578 ²	\$52 ⁴
1790	37,935	34,140 ³	3,795
1791	46,294	39,208	7,086
1792	67,444	58,031 ³	9,413
1793	104,747	75,540 ³	29,207
1794	128,947	94,073 ³	34,874
1795	160,625	121,993 ³	38,632
1796	195,067	135,672 ³	59,395
1797	213,998	154,486 ³	59,512
1798	232,977	183,184 ³	49,793
1799	264,846	198,988	65,758
1800	280,804	227,375	53,429
1801	320,443	268,856	51,587
1802	327,045	295,621	31,424
1803	351,823	337,864	13,959
1804	389,450	353,457	35,993
1805	421,373	393,342	28,031
1806	446,106	432,689	13,417
1807	478,763	470,835	7,928
1808	460,564	481,328	20,674 ⁴
1809	506,634	516,512	9,878 ⁴
1810	551,684	514,469	37,215
1811	587,247	521,357	65,890
1812	649,208	562,042	87,160
1813	703,155	704,781	1,626 ⁴
1814	730,730	754,491	23,761 ⁴
1815	1,043,065	774,333	268,732
1816	961,782	835,222	126,560
1817	1,002,973	946,380	56,593
1818	1,130,235	1,065,697	64,538
1819	1,204,737	1,154,221	50,516
1820	1,111,927	1,197,916	85,989 ⁴
1821	1,056,658	1,219,103	162,535 ⁴
1822	1,117,490	1,184,322	66,832 ⁴
1823	1,114,345	1,211,717	97,372 ⁴
1824	1,153,845	1,212,494	58,649 ⁴
1825	1,306,525	1,273,431	33,094
1826	1,447,703	1,409,062	38,641
1827	1,524,633	1,513,309	11,324
1828	1,664,759	1,745,143	80,384 ⁴
1829	1,773,910	1,943,195	169,205 ⁴

¹ Three months, October 5, 1789 to January 5, 1790.

² Operating expenses only.

³ Does not include incidental expenses of the General Post Office.

⁴ Deficit.

TABLE IV

AVERAGE ANNUAL RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES BY FIVE-YEAR PERIODS

Years	Receipts	Expenditures	Surplus
1790-1794	\$77,073	\$60,198	\$16,875
1795-1799	213,502	158,864	54,637
1800-1804	333,913	296,634	37,278
1805-1809	462,688	458,921	3,764
1810-1814	644,405	611,428	32,975
1815-1819	1,068,558	955,171	113,387
1820-1824	1,110,853	1,205,110	94,275 ¹
1825-1829	1,543,506	1,576,828	33,306 ¹

INCREASE IN EACH PERIOD AS COMPARED WITH THE PRECEDING ONE

1795-1799	177 %	158 %	218 %
1800-1804	56	83	-32 ²
1805-1809	26	60	-90 ²
1810-1814	47	33	776
1815-1819	71	56	225
1820-1824	3	27	-183 ²
1825-1829	39	30	62

¹ Deficit.² Decrease.

TABLE V

EXPENDITURES AND NET REVENUE IN TERMS OF GROSS RECEIPTS
FROM POSTAGE

Years	Expenditures	Net revenue
1790-1794	79.2 %	21.8 %
1795-1799	74.5	25.5
1800-1804	88.9	11.1
1805-1809	99.2	0.8
1810-1814	94.9	5.1
1815-1819	89.4	10.6
1820-1824	108.5	8.5 ¹
1825-1829	102.1	2.1 ¹

¹ Deficit.

TABLE VI

APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

1799	\$10,950	1815	\$26,212
1800	13,381	1816	30,800
1801	13,705	1817	29,865
1802	13,705	1818	29,865
1803	15,500	1819	36,360
1804	15,955	1820	36,360
1805	15,975	1821	36,360
1806	15,455	1822	36,750
1807	16,950	1823	41,832
1808	18,500	1824	42,350
1809	18,500	1825	44,388
1810	18,500	1826	42,350
1811	22,279	1827	44,350
1812	21,877	1828	54,100
1813	23,769	1829	63,888
1814	27,365		

For the period 1799-1829 these figures represent the administrative expenses of the Department. Prior to that time the expenditures for these purposes were made out of postal revenue, as follows:

1790	\$3,500 ¹
1791	3,611
1792	3,500 ¹
1793	3,500 ¹
1794	4,200 ¹
1795	4,200 ¹
1796	4,200 ¹
1797	4,471 ¹
1798	4,200 ¹

¹ Does not include incidental expenses of the General Post Office.

TABLE VII

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE. I

Year	Postmasters' commissions	Incidental expenses	Transportation of mails
1790	\$8,198	\$1,861	\$22,081
1791	10,312	3,092	23,293
1792	16,518	5,282	32,731
1793	21,646	5,660	44,734
1794	27,156	9,812	53,005
1795	30,272	12,262	75,359
1796	35,730	14,353	81,489
1797	47,109	13,623	89,382
1798	56,035	16,035	107,014
1799	63,958	14,605	109,475
1800	69,243	16,107	128,644
1801	79,338	23,363	152,450
1802	85,587	21,658	174,671
1803	93,170	24,084	205,110
1804	107,716	24,231	205,555
1805	111,552	26,180	239,635
1806	119,785	28,416	269,033
1807	129,041	32,093	292,751
1808	128,653	28,676	305,499
1809	141,579	23,516	332,917
1810	149,438	18,565	327,966
1811	159,244	20,689	319,166
1812	177,422	22,117	340,626
1813	221,848	20,605	438,559
1814	234,354	17,170	475,602
1815	241,901	18,441	487,779
1816	265,544	16,508	521,970
1817	303,916	23,410	589,189
1818	346,429	24,792	664,611
1819	375,828	24,152	717,881
1820	352,295	26,206	782,425
1821	336,239	31,003	815,681
1822	355,299	23,665	788,618
1823	360,462	29,069	767,464
1824	383,804	35,276	768,939
1825	411,183	32,214	785,646
1826	447,727	33,885	885,100
1827	486,411	40,203	942,345
1828	548,858	55,873	1,086,312
1829	575,165	58,873	1,245,269

This table analyzes only the operating expenses of the Department.
For an account of the administrative expenditures cf. Table VI.

TABLE VIII

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE. 2

Annual average expenditure for certain purposes

Period	Commissions to postmasters	Incidental expenses	Transportation of mails	Administra- tive expenses
1790-1794.....	\$16,766	\$5,141	\$35,168	\$3,662
1795-1799	46,620	14,175	92,543	5,604
1800-1804	87,010	21,928	172,886	14,449
1805-1809	108,120	28,176	287,966	17,076
1810-1814	188,461	19,629	380,383	22,558
1815-1819	306,725	23,460	596,286	30,780
1820-1824	357,619	33,001	764,625	38,730
1825-1829	493,868	44,209	988,934	54,866

Increase in each period as compared with the preceding one

1795-1799	178 %	175 %	163 %	53 %
1800-1804	87	54	88	157
1805-1809	24	28	66	18
1810-1814	74	31 ¹	32	32
1815-1819	62	19	56	36
1820-1824	16	44	28	25
1825-1829	35	33	30	41

¹ Decrease.

TABLE IX

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE. 3

Percentage of total spent

Years	Postmasters' Commissions	Incidental expenses	Transportation of mails	Administra- tive expenses
1790-1794	27.8 %	8.5 %	58.4 %	5.3 %
1795-1799	29.3	8.9	58.2	3.6
1800-1804	29.3	7.3	58.2	5.2
1805-1809	23.5	6.1	62.7	7.7
1810-1814	30.8	3.2	62.2	3.8
1815-1819	32.1	2.4	62.4	3.1
1820-1824	29.6	2.7	63.4	4.3
1825-1829	31.3	2.8	62.7	3.2

TABLE X

PAYMENTS INTO THE TREASURY OF THE UNITED STATES BY THE
POST OFFICE

1793	\$11,021	1812	\$85,039
1794	29,478	1813	35,000
1795	22,400	1814	45,000
1796	72,909	1815	135,000
1797	64,500	1816 .....	...
1798	39,500	1817	29,371
1799	41,000	1818	20,070
1800	78,000	1819	71
1801	79,500	1820	3,720
1802	35,000	1821	517
1803	16,427	1822	602
1804	26,500	1823	111
1805	21,343	1824 .....	...
1806	41,117	1825	469
1807	3,614	1826	300
1808 .....	...	1827	101
1809 .....	...	1828	28
1810 .....	...	1829	87
1811	38		

Total, 1793-1829, \$943,022.

TABLE XI

NET REVENUE AND PAYMENTS INTO THE TREASURY IN TERMS OF
GROSS RECEIPTS

Years	Net revenue	Payments
1790-1794	21.8 %	10.5 %
1795-1799	25.5	22.5
1800-1804	11.1	20.0
1805-1809	1.0	3.1
1810-1814	5.1	5.2
1815-1819	10.6	3.4
1820-1824	8.5 ¹	0.8
1825-1829	2.1 ¹	0.01
1790-1829	8.0	8.1

¹ Deficit.

TABLE XII

GROSS RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR MAIL TRANSPORTATION
PER MILE OF POST ROAD*Annual averages for five-year periods*

Years	Receipts	Payments
1790-1794	\$15.41	\$7.03
1795-1799	14.80	6.17
1800-1804	13.56	7.02
1805-1809	12.70	8.65
1810-1814	15.70	9.51
1815-1819	19.21	10.90
1820-1824	13.62	9.44
1825-1829	14.85	9.46



